

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 08252467 3



1/2
2/2
8 0.9

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

NAS
BANK

1608.

PRINCE CARROTTE

AND

OTHER CHRONICLES

BY

VIRGINIA BAKER R

1

With Illustrations by Augustus Hoppin

BOSTON

PRESS OF ROCKWELL AND CHURCHILL

39 ARCH STREET

1881

TE

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
501119
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1949 C

Copyright, 1881,
By VIRGINIA BAKER.

I

PRINCE CARROTTE

PRINCE CARROTTE.

I.

"There goes the knocker again," muttered Mr. Sylverskyn Onion, disconsolately laying down the newspaper he had just unfolded. "Great Roots! It seems as if one visitor wasn't fairly out of the house before another arrives."

Mr. Onion arose with an almost savage air, and began to snuff the candles. There were four of them on the great baize-covered table, but he had only time to trim two ere the library door was thrown violently open, and a large and evidently very excited lettuce walked, or, to speak more correctly, precipitated himself into the room.

The snuffers fell from Mr. Onion's hand.

"Great Rabbit's Ears!" he exclaimed. "What is the matter, Lord Atherton?"

The lettuce threw himself into an easy-chair, and, drawing a red silk handkerchief from his pocket, began to fan with it violently. Suddenly he turned abruptly towards the onion.

"Well, this is a pretty state of things!" he exclaimed vehemently.

The onion looked at him questioningly. He was about to inquire to what his companion particularly alluded, but the lettuce interrupted him.

"Is it possible," he cried, "that you have heard nothing of the affair between Lord Walter Tomato and Sir Stryng Beane?"

Mr. Onion shook his head.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The most outrageous and disgusting piece of business that was ever perpetrated in the city of Esculentsia," replied the lettuce. "Listen, and I will tell you the whole story. This morning Lord Walter was quietly walking along Pod street, when he chanced to meet Sir Stryng. Both Vegetables paused, and shook hands, and then very naturally fell into conversation, during which Lord Walter remarked that it looked like rain. 'No, it does not,' replied Sir Stryng. 'Why, I think it does,' said Lord Walter; whereupon, without a moment's warning, Sir Stryng gathered up his leaves and tendrils, and, exclaiming that he would not be contradicted, swept them full across Lord Walter's eyes. The blow was terrific! It opened a gash two or three inches in length, just over his right eyebrow, beside inflicting severe injuries on other parts of his face. Yet he can obtain no satisfaction!"

"Obtain no satisfaction?" echoed the onion. "What do you mean?"

"That he has challenged him, and Sir Stryng refuses to fight," answered the lettuce. "You need not look so sceptical—I am speaking the truth, and have more yet to tell you. Sir Stryng threatens Lord Walter's life!"

"His life!" exclaimed Mr. Onion. "In what way?"

"I will try to relate the whole story," said the lettuce,



String-beane insulting the Tomato.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

B

U

whose excitement was gradually abating. "After Stryng Beane struck Lord Walter, he jumped into his carriage, which, it seems, was standing near by, and drove rapidly away. Lord Walter was taken up senseless and removed to his home, where he remained in a semi-unconscious state for two hours. Recovering himself somewhat, however, at about eleven o'clock he despatched a polite note to Sir Stryng, requesting a meeting at an early day. No answer was returned to this; so Lord Walter asked Count French Turnippe to visit him and ascertain what his intentions were. The count immediately started for Beane House, but as he drove up the avenue Sir Stryng rushed out upon the piazza, and, without waiting for Count French to alight, exclaimed insolently:—

"Go back, young Vegetable, and tell your impudent friend Tomato, that I will not cross rapiers with him, but will, when Greene Korne ascends the throne, cause him to be hanged on the spot where he insulted me!"

Mr. Onion sprang to his feet.

"What," he ejaculated, "what did he say?"

"Exactly the words that I have repeated," replied the lettuce.

The onion raised both hands.

"Well, I never heard such impertinence in my life!" he exclaimed.

"Impertinence!" echoed the lettuce. "Why, my dear Sylverskyn, the impertinence of the words is the very last thing that troubles me! It is their purport, man, it is their purport that engages my attention."

"Their purport?" repeated the onion, inquiringly.

"Yes, yes," said the lettuce, excitedly. "Did you not notice that Sir Stryng used the expression, 'When Greene Korne ascends the throne'?"

Mr. Onion started.

"Why, you do not mean to insinuate that Parliament is about to decide in Greene Korne's favor?" he exclaimed.

The lettuce nodded.

"Exactly!" said he, coolly.

The onion fell back in his chair quite speechless. The lettuce continued:—

"Yes, my dear Sylverskyn, that is my meaning. Stryng Beane is a very wary fellow. He is in all the secrets of the Korne party, and he must be pretty sure that there is a prospect of Greene Korne ascending the throne, or he would not have spoken as he did. But, putting his words entirely aside, there are other grounds for a supposition that all is not as well with Prince Carrotte's cause as it might be. Mr. Yellow Pumpkin informed Lord Irish Potato this morning that he had reason to suppose two-thirds of both houses of Parliament have been bribed to cast in their vote for Greene Korne."

Mr. Onion groaned.

"Is every one crazy?" he murmured.

"No," said the lettuce; "but," he added, with a grim smile, "I think they must want another revolution."

"Great Stalks! I should suppose they had seen enough of war," said Mr. Onion.

"And so they have! so they have!" rejoined the lettuce;

“but I tell you, Sylverskyn, the country will not become settled until the lawful heir is seated on the throne. The majority of the people do not want Greene Korne for their monarch, and if Parliament decides for him another revolution will surely follow. I feel a presentiment of this in every leaf! Even now Prince Charles is regarded as a martyr by the masses.”

“And he is a martyr,” interrupted the onion, with more excitement than he had yet evinced; “he is a martyr, and so was his father! I tell you, Lord Atherton, it makes my heart fairly tremble with indignation when I reflect upon what our late king suffered. Deprived of the throne which his family had occupied since the Vegetable monarchy first existed; deprived, I say, through the machinations of his premier,—the man whom he trusted above all others, and who stirred up rebellion against him only that he might seize the crown himself,—exiled from his country, and doomed to live in misery with no prospect of a recovery of his rights, either for himself or his son, Great Stalks! I do not wonder that he died of a broken heart.”

The lettuce shook his head mournfully.

“Oh, it really seemed as if fate was against him!” continued Mr. Onion. “If he could but have survived the usurper,—I will not call him the emperor Korne,—perhaps Vegetabilia would have recalled him to the throne.”

“Perhaps,” replied the lettuce; “but I doubt it. The emperor’s son would have been an obstacle in the path of King Richard as he is in that of Prince Charles to-day.

"Great Leaves!" exclaimed the onion, impatiently; "what an immense nuisance this Greene Korne is!"

"True," said the lettuce; "but how much worse would matters be if we had no lawful prince to dispute his claim to the throne! How infinitely more horrible if, at the time of the emperor's death, young Greene had been old enough to have ascended the throne! Why, I count it as a most fortunate thing that he was then but a child, for, during the many years that Parliament has ruled, the people have had an opportunity to discover the true worth of King Richard's character, and the utter baseness of the emperor's motives."

"And yet you tell me that Parliament, knowing all this, will declare in favor of Greene Korne?" cried the onion.

"It will, most certainly," answered the lettuce.

Mr. Onion passed his hand across his brow.

"What shall we do?" he said faintly.

"Defy Parliament!" exclaimed the lettuce, springing to his feet. "Defy Parliament, and place our rightful sovereign on the throne!"

"But how can we do this?" said the onion.

"I will tell you," replied the lettuce, recovering his self-control by an immense effort. "We must get the people so excited in Prince Charles' favor that Parliament will not dare oppose them."

"But can we influence the people?" said Mr. Onion.

"Easily," rejoined the lettuce; "and you are the Vegetable who must do it."

"I!" exclaimed the astonished onion. "Explain yourself, Lord Atherton, I beg!"

"To be clearly comprehended," replied the lettuce, "I shall be obliged to turn back to my narrative. As soon as Count French Turnippe returned from Beane House he sent in great haste for several Vegetables, myself among the number, to meet in the Club Rooms at three o'clock. Upon obeying this request, we found him very indignant at what Sir Stryng had said, and he also expressed a conviction that Parliament was about to declare in favor of Greene Korne. This statement alarmed us greatly, and it was instantly decided that something must be done to prevent the catastrophe. Several plans were discussed, but none met with approbation save that suggested by Lord Irish Potato. Lord Irish said the great thing was to make the people openly declare themselves for Prince Charles; in short, to stir up such an excitement in his favor as should strike terror to the hearts of the Kornists, and he proposed that, in order to accomplish this, we should hold a mass meeting in the Park Royal, next Thursday evening."

"Well," said the onion, "what have I to do with all this?"

"Why, we want you to deliver the opening address upon that occasion," replied the lettuce.

"I!" exclaimed Mr. Onion. "Why, my dear Lord Atherton, the people know nothing about me."

"More than you think, I assure you," answered the lettuce. "You were stigmatized last week in the 'Ears of Corn' as an 'airy orator.' That is sufficient to show that the Kornists believe you to possess talent."

"Why, I have spoken once or twice at political and club meetings," said Mr. Onion, "and my hearers were very attentive; but whether the public will listen to me I do not know."

"Listen!" echoed the lettuce; "listen!—of course they will listen! How can they help listening?—And if your statements are true they will believe them. Now, do not grow timid, I beg, for I've laid all my plans and don't want them spoiled."

"I am not timid," said the onion, thoughtfully, "but I doubt if my talents will prove equal to the occasion."

"Oh, yes, they will!" cried the lettuce. "Come, consent to my proposition."

Mr. Onion hesitated, and looked gravely on the floor. Lord Atherton's assertions were very flattering, but would all the Vegetables think as he did? That was the great question; but just here, as if in answer to it, the lettuce remarked:—

"Both Count French Turnippe and Lord Irish Potato spoke to me of your superior ability, and said they knew no one better fitted than yourself to deliver an eloquent oration."

The onion's heart leaped. The turnip was, as he knew, a refined and educated Vegetable, but sarcastic, and, above all things, averse to flattery. Praise, therefore, from his lips was considered extremely precious, because he never bestowed it upon an unworthy person. As for Lord Irish Potato, he was an old and experienced politician, and certainly ought to be a judge of oratorical

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

V



Mr Onion preparing his speech.

talent. No sooner, therefore, did Mr. Onion hear the lettuce's words than he replied:—

“Well, my lord, I will consent to do as you wish, though still doubting my powers.”

The lettuce seized his hand, and pressed it warmly.

“Thank you a thousand times!” he exclaimed earnestly; “and now,” he added, “I must go and report your decision to the other Vegetables;” and, springing up, he rushed from the room almost as precipitately as he had entered it.

Left alone, Mr. Onion resumed his seat by the table, and fell into a profound revery. The unexpected communication of the lettuce regarding the high esteem in which his powers were held by two of the most talented Vegetables of the country filled his heart with joy, and he determined that he would prove himself quite worthy of their regard.

The next few days were to him a season of anxiety and thought. Day and night saw him at work upon his address, laboring to bring it to that perfection he desired.

Meanwhile Lord Atherton Lettuce was no less busy. In every quarter of the city of Esculentsia he caused to be posted large bills, which announced in blazing letters that upon the sixteenth day of July a gigantic mass meeting of Carrottites would be holden in the Park Royal, when Mr. Sylverskyn Onion, the young and talented orator, would deliver an address upon the state of political affairs in Vegetableria, and circulars containing the same statements were distributed at every door.

Several exciting editorials also appeared in the "Carrot Leaf," the most popular newspaper among the Carrottites, which were immediately responded to in the "Ears of Corn," the leading organ of the Kornists.

The consequence was that public curiosity was aroused to the highest pitch, and upon the long-expected evening thousands of Vegetables from east, west, north, and south flocked to the Park Royal; but, great as was the assembly, not a sound was heard as the orator of the evening, accompanied by Count French Turnippe, Lord Irish Potato, and Lord Atherton Lettuce, appeared upon the rostrum, which occupied the centre of the enclosure, and, bowing gracefully to the right and left, began his speech.

"Friends, Vegetables, Countrymen!" said he; but the shouts and cheers which greeted these words drowned his voice, and he was forced to wait until the storm of applause had subsided, when he resumed:—

"You are met here this evening to discuss a question of vital importance to the prosperity of the Vegetable nation!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Go on!" shouted the Vegetables in full chorus, and Mr. Onion proceeded:—

"It is this: Will you place upon the throne the prince to whom it rightfully belongs, or will you disgrace your country a second time by crowning a usurper? Will you remember that the first monarch of this nation was a carrot, or will you forget that, and—" but here such a succession of hisses, cheers, and groans rent the air that he was obliged to pause again.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

L



Cucumbers bearing Mr Onion along in triumph.

“No Korne for us! Down with the Pretender! Hurrah for Prince Charlie!” were the cries that sounded in all directions; and a body of cucumbers, pushing through the phalanx of Vegetables, seized the onion, and, perching him on their shoulders, bore him triumphantly around the park amid the deafening cheers of the crowd.

Confusion reigned supreme, and order was restored only by a strong detachment of radishes, mounted on rabbits, and armed to the teeth, bursting through the ranks and rescuing the onion from the hands of the cucumbers, who, in their efforts to show their admiration of him, had nearly pulled him to pieces. He was restored in safety to the platform and allowed to proceed with his speech.

Ah, well might Count French Turnippe and Lord Irish Potato praise the superior oratorical talents of the onion! Never had such a moving, impressive, and eloquent address been delivered in Vegetabilia. The Vegetables listened to it with dilated eyes and bated breath. Not a murmur escaped them till the last word was spoken, and then, as if by one impulse, they burst into a perfect thunder of applause.

“Hurrah for the onion!” exclaimed a long crooked-neck squash, waving a large yellow silk handkerchief round and round his head; “Hurrah for the onion! He tells us the truth.”

“Ay! Ay!” added a cabbage; “the corn shall not be our king!”

“Give us our Charlie! Give us our Charlie!” yelled a cucumber. “We want no Parliament emperors.”

"We want no emperors at all," put in a turnip-radish. "We have had enough of them. We want what we ought to have — a king!"

"A king is good enough for me!" chimed in a potato.

"I say Prince Charlie is the only Vegetable that ought to govern this country!" screamed a tomato.

"And I say," exclaimed a bean, springing up and overturning two or three peppers as he rose, — "I say that you are all a parcel of idiots, and don't know what you are talking about!"

"Sir Stryng," said the tomato, turning toward him angrily, "am I to consider this a personal insult?"

"Consider it anything you choose," replied the bean. "All I have to say is that the boy Charles Carrotte, or, as you foolishly call him, Prince Charlie, is fitted in no respect to rule a nation!"

"Why so?" asked the tomato, coolly.

"Because," replied the bean, "he isn't. I don't like him."

"Well, really," cried a potato, his eyes glistening with rage, "that is *too* bad! If you don't like him, Sir Stryng, of course a large portion of the other inhabitants of Vegetabilia can't think of admiring him. They all will immediately alter their opinion to please *you*."

"Hold your saucy tongue!" cried the bean, and, gathering up his leaves, he swept them full in the potato's eyes.

Fortunately, however, that Vegetable, being near-sighted, had on a pair of spectacles, and the leaves struck without

injuring him, and Sir Stryng was forced to vent his anger upon the cabbage. Turning toward him with a movement so sudden that his victim had no time to escape, he extended one of his tendrils, and seizing the cabbage's nose gave it a severe and lengthened pull; then, without a word, he marched haughtily through the crowd and disappeared from sight.

The cabbage's heart swelled with indignation. He attempted to speak, but words failed him, and, exhausted with rage, he sank down, fainting, beside the tomato. He was removed to a grassy spot by two radishes, and after considerable difficulty restored to consciousness.

The anger of the Vegetables at the unparalleled conduct of the bean knew no bounds, and loud cries for vengeance resounded on every side. Detectives Parsnipp and Asparagus mingled in the crowd, endeavoring to secure him; but he was not to be found.

Order, however, being once more restored, Count French Turnippe arose and made a brief address, in which he stated that Mr. Onion had advanced sentiments which every Vegetable ought to echo; that it could not be denied the throne of his ancestors certainly belonged to Prince Carrotte and not to the corn, who was nothing but the son of a usurper, and much more to the same effect. Lords Lettuce and Potato and Sir Green Tomato seconded him, but hardly had they ceased speaking ere a voice called out:—

“Charles Carrotte! What in the world do you want of him? If you give him the sceptre he will only abuse his

power, as did his father before him. Choose Greene Korne for your sovereign! Greene Korne,—the son of the Vegetable who raised your country from a kingdom to an empire; who did more to advance and elevate you than forty generations of Carrotte would ever have done,—choose Greene Korne, I say!”

It was the bean who spoke. Determined in some manner to have his say, he contrived to climb a tree, thus eluding the detectives, and from its branches he addressed his remarks to the throng below. His words created some excitement among the Vegetables, and general discussion regarding the relative merits of the corn and carrot ensued.

A spinach arose and declared himself in favor of the corn. “The Carrottes,” he cried, in a rough, blustering tone, “have for years been considered remarkable fellows. For my part, I think they have had a very easy time, living upon the best of the land and taxing the poor to pay for their pleasure! In my opinion the corn is much more to be respected than they, inasmuch as against a thousand difficulties he wrested our country from their tyrannous power, and I think that in gratitude to him we ought to make his son our monarch!”

These words excited the indignation of the yellow squash, who, springing from his seat and stretching out his neck to its longest extent, exclaimed sarcastically:—

“Gammon and Spinach!”

A burst of laughter greeted this remark; but the bean, who still maintained his exalted position, called out:—

“It is not the spinach whom we wish to crown, but

the corn!" and as a few of the corn's friends ventured to indulge in one or two cheers, he descended from the tree, and, marching boldly on to the platform, made a long harangue, in which he exhorted the Vegetables to come bravely forward and set the crown upon the corn's brow.

"Do not," he cried, "be influenced by such persons as the onion, the turnip, and our sarcastic friend the squash, who all are mere adventurers, seeking their own aggrandizement; but choose for yourselves,—you are free to,—and look for a sovereign who will dignify your throne, not for one who will be a disgrace to your nation!"

At these words wild screams, hisses, cheers, and groans rent the air, and a general excitement began. Turnips rolled distractedly around, shouting at the top of their voices; cucumbers clambered around every tree and post, howling like lunatics; beans and peas twined themselves about each other, and pinched until both shrieked with pain; squashes, cabbages, and beets bumped madly against each other; the onions poked their sprouts into the potatoes' eyes, and the egg-plants threw themselves like foot-balls against the parsnips; while thousands of other Vegetables, who were either too mild in temper, or too well bred to fight, indulged in imitations of the cries of various animals.

In vain did Chief of Police Radysh call "Char-r-r-ge," and spur his rabbit into the thickest of the fight, and in vain did his under officers follow his example. The noise grew louder and louder, the blows fell faster and faster, and the disturbance was quelled only by the onion, who sprang from his seat and addressed the infuriated mob.

He rebuked it in a mild, but firm manner for its unseemly display of party feeling; he exhorted it to cease quarrelling, and finally, in a few well-chosen words, he dismissed the meeting.

Several of the most pugnacious Vegetables seemed inclined to murmur at this; but, as the principal speakers at once retired, they withdrew to their homes, and quiet reigned over the streets of Esculentsia.

II.

For the next month the question, "Which shall be king, the corn or the carrot?" was the one principally discussed among Vegetables. Mass meetings were held every evening in the Park Royal, and the most talented orators from all parts of the country were invited to address the people. Let it not, however, be supposed that the excitement was entirely confined to Esculentsia. On the contrary it had extended to every town, village, and hamlet of Vegetabilia.

Parliament, bewildered and chagrined by the unexpected stroke of policy by which the Carrottites had interested the people so strongly in their behalf, suspended the rendering of its final decision, and mutely waited for the climax to arrive.

Meanwhile the disputes between the two parties grew more and more frequent, and at length it became actually unsafe for Vegetables of opposing political opinions to meet; for if they did a quarrel was sure to ensue, in which one



*The Sweet Potato Captain presenting the missive
to Mr Onion.*

or the other would be wounded. The police could not maintain the peace; for the mobs of people who thronged the streets cared neither for them nor their weapons, and it not unfrequently happened that they fell into little private altercations among themselves.

One evening, however, affairs reached their crisis. The Carrottites were assembled in the park, and the onion was just in the midst of delivering a speech, when suddenly a troop of sweet potatoes, mounted on rabbits, dashed into the grounds, and, wheeling around, formed a semi-circle in front of the platform; and the leader, a fat, clumsy-looking Vegetable, who maintained his position upon his restive rodent with the utmost difficulty, presented a sealed packet to the onion.

Our orator opened it at once, but as he glanced over its contents a flush mantled his cheek. Advancing to the front of the rostrum, he thus addressed the Vegetables:—

“My Countrymen! I have received a communication from Sir Stryng Beane and other Kornists, which it behooves me to present to you for consideration; therefore, with your permission, I will repeat it aloud;” and again unfolding the missive, he read as follows:—

“MR. SYLVERSKYN ONION, *and other members of the Carrotte Party*:—

“VEGETABLES, —If you do not within three days openly avow your intention of withdrawing all allegiance from Charles Carrotte, I shall be obliged to open war upon you.

“STRYNG BEANE, *Bart.*,

“*In behalf of eight thousand members of the Korne Party.*

“FORT KOBBE, CITY OF ESCULENTSIA, Aug. 20.”

As Mr. Onion ceased reading and refolded the paper a shout arose from the lips of the Carrottites.

"He defies us, does he?" exclaimed the yellow squash. "What nonsense! 'Open war upon you' indeed! Well, I never heard such folly in my life!"

"There is something more in this than we suspect, I fear," said a radish.

"Nonsense!" answered a tomato. "Sir Stryng is naught but a bully."

"What do you understand by this being dated from Fort Kobbe?" whispered Count French Turnippe to Mr. Onion.

"I scarcely dare to express an opinion," replied the onion; but, even as he spoke, a beet, mounted on a gigantic hare, dashed wildly into the enclosure, and reining in his foaming animal by a powerful effort, cried in a voice of thunder:—

"Carrottites! the Kornists have assembled troops at Fort Kobbe!"

The consternation excited by these words can be more easily imagined than described.

"Death to the corn!" exclaimed a pumpkin, rolling over and over on the grass in a sort of frenzy. "Death to the corn, I say!"

"Death to the bean, rather!" cried a pepper.

"Kill them all! Kill them all!" roared a cucumber. "Give them no quarter!"

"Hurrah for Prince Charlie!" yelled the yellow squash.

"Yes! yes!" cried the others in full chorus. "Hurrah for Prince Charlie! Hurrah for Prince Charlie!"



The Pumpkin rolling over and over on the grass.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R

“Well,” interrupted the sweet-potato captain, impatiently addressing the onion, “have you any answer to make to this message?”

“Sir,” replied Mr. Onion, while his fine eyes lighted up with animation, “sir, I have! Tell Sir Stryng Beane and the eight thousand members of the Korne Party, that never will I, or any other true friend of justice and liberty, desert the cause of our sovereign lord Prince Charles! Tell him I defy him to the teeth, and will do battle with him whensoever and wheresoever he pleases!”

“And tell him also,” cried the yellow squash, suddenly vaulting upon the platform, “tell him the next time he has occasion to mention His Royal Highness’ name in a letter, to please place the word Prince before it.”

The sweet-potato captain deigned to pay no heed to this latter speech, but waved a respectful adieu to Mr. Onion, and, followed by his troop, galloped out of the enclosure.

Mr. Onion again turned toward the Vegetables.

“My friends,” said he, in a clear, calm voice, “the reply which I have made to Sir Stryng Beane’s insolent missive meets, I trust, with your approbation.”

“Ay! ay!” shouted the excited Vegetables.

“Then let us pledge ourselves to-night,” said Mr. Onion, “let us pledge ourselves to the cause of our disinherited prince.”

“Ay! ay!” reiterated the Vegetables. “We will shed our last drop of blood for him!”

“Vegetables,” cried Mr. Onion, while his splendid eyes again lighted with enthusiasm, “you have spoken well,

and when Prince Charles shall return from Fruitania — as I feel in my heart that he will — to ascend that throne from which his martyred father was driven, then I say will you receive the full reward of your patriotism! Then will you see Peace, Prosperity, and Justice exercise their sway over the now agitated realm of Vegetabilia!”

Mr. Onion sank back in his chair amid the wildest applause.

Lord Atherton Lettuce then arose, and, after exhorting the Carrottites to maintain a peaceable behavior toward the Kornists until it was definitely decided when a battle should take place, dismissed the meeting.

While the Carrottites, obedient to the lettuce’s request, were dispersing quietly to their several homes, Mr. Onion desired Sir Tancred Beete, the Vegetable who had brought the intelligence regarding the troops assembled at Fort Kobbe, to relate further particulars, if he knew any.

Sir Tancred’s story was a short one. He was hastening to attend the mass meeting, when, upon suddenly turning the corner of a street, he saw approaching a large body of soldiers, armed and marching with flying colors. As they drew nearer he recognized at their head Bushe Beane, the cousin of Stryng, and the whole party, upon close inspection, proved to be Kornists. Alarmed at their appearance, Sir Tancred turned his steed and followed them. They marched directly toward the river, and he soon suspected their destination was Fort Kobbe. He was not mistaken. As they came in sight of the fort hundreds and hundreds of Vegetables appeared in every direction.

“The entire vicinity is converted into an immense campground,” concluded Sir Tancred; “but how Stryng Beane has accomplished this so secretly is a mystery to me.”

“We will walk down toward the fort and see how affairs are progressing,” said Lord Irish Potato.

Accordingly, accompanied by the turnip, lettuce, onion, and beet, he left the park and struck into a dark and secluded street, which led to the river. They traversed it in silence, with their cloaks wrapped tightly around them, while their ears sought to catch the faintest sound that floated on the air. As they advanced nearer and nearer the water, the hum of voices became audible, blended with the tramp of rabbits and the hoarse notes of the bugle, and in a few moments they found themselves close upon the Kornist encampment.

Although neither moon nor stars shone in the sky, a brightness as of day was diffused around. The torch which nearly every Vegetable bore in his hand threw up its ruddy blaze, and brought each object into full relief.

To and from the fort officers were hurrying, giving and receiving instructions, and shouting to the men, who, with frantic haste, rushed hither and thither. Every moment some craft would float up the river, and discharge a party of armed Vegetables at the fort, while from all directions on land troops came pouring in.

Our friends drew back into the shadows as one of these passed them on its way to the camp. It was a body of egg-plants, clothed in purple velvet, and wearing green caps with gilded visors. They were armed with bows and

arrows, and bore a large banner of white silk fringed with purple and gold, and having on it a sketch at sight of which the hearts of our friends trembled with indignation.

War, represented by a tremendous beet, clad in armor, was pictured as lying prostrate, crushed by a mammoth ear of corn, while above him were inscribed the words, "A Dead Beet!"

This company was followed by a small corps of asparagus stalks, on whose satin banner appeared these lines:—

Shall Charles the carrot mount the throne
He falsely claimeth for his own?
No! not while Beane the brave is nigh.
Prepare, then, carrot — you must die!

This verse seemed to amuse Lord Irish Potato very much.

"It seems to me," he remarked, "that the bean is a person of some consequence. The corn appears to sink into insignificance beside him."

"Hush!" said Count French Turnippe; "here is another troop!"

It was a company of spinach, resplendent in a uniform of bright green silk, and their standard was highly decorated. On one side was painted a battle-field, over which were strewn the dead bodies of several cucumbers, and beneath them was written the one word "Pickled!"

On the other side of the banner appeared an onion, bear-

ing a remarkable facial resemblance to Mr. Sylverskyn, and he was represented as saying:—

Rareripes, rareripes, now declare
What you saw at the palace when you were there?

To which question several rareripes reply:—

Korne, the emperor, throned on high,
With Beane, the premier, standing by!

The anger of Lord Atherton Lettuce upon reading this was intense, and only the restraining hands of his friends prevented him from rushing forward and felling the bearer of the standard to the ground. His attention, however, was soon attracted by a noble-looking Vegetable, mounted on a spirited hare, who dashed by them toward the Kornist lines.

"It is Redd Kabbage, Duke of Krout," whispered Sir Tancred Beete.

The duke rode straight up to the camp-ground and was about to enter, when a sentinel, who was pacing to and fro, called out:—

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"A friend," replied the duke.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign," said the sentinel.

"Beane and Korne!" said the duke, promptly.

"Pass!" cried the sentinel, and the duke rode forward.

Lord Irish Potato laughed till the tears streamed from his eyes.

"Beane and Korne!" he repeated. "Well, that is a good joke. Sir Stryng is certainly very respectful to place his own name before that of his prince."

"Do you know," said Mr. Onion, seriously, "I believe he is looking for the crown himself."

"Come," said Lord Lettuce, "let us go. I know if I stand here much longer I shall rush into the camp, and plunge my rapier through Sir Stryng's pod."

As the four friends retraced their steps to the city they constantly encountered companies of Vegetables hurrying toward Fort Kobbe.

Corn, beans, parsnips, sweet potatoes, leeks, celery, and hundreds of others, armed with bows and muskets, marched onward to the inspiring music of drums and fifes.

Upon arriving home Mr. Onion found a sealed packet awaiting him, which proved to be a letter from Stryng Beane, informing him the Kornists would certainly begin a war, if within a month the Carrotte Party was not dispersed.

"What?" cried Lord Potato. "Why, the last letter only allowed you three days. Can Sir Stryng have become weak?"

"Three days, three months, or three years," replied Mr. Onion, "my answer should still be the same;" and drawing the gauntlet from his hand he despatched it by a trusty messenger to Fort Kobbe.

An hour later he received word from Sir Stryng that the challenge of the Carrottites was accepted.

Although the bean had made such extensive preparations for war he had not dared to attempt to close and guard the gates of the city, and free ingress and egress could still be obtained. It is true his head-quarters were at Fort Kobbe, but this was not to be wondered at, as months before, when he found party spirit running so high, the young Greene Korne had retired there, feeling that his life indeed required the protection of the military.

The three weeks which followed the eventful evening just described were passed in preparing for the great day of the battle. From every quarter of Vegetableria soldiers marched into Esculentsia, some to join the Carrottites, others to unite with the Kornists; but all bringing trusty blades and loyal hearts to their chosen cause.

It was a cool September morning. In the tent of Count French Turnippe, the Commander-in-Chief of the Carrottite forces, sat Mr. Onion, intent upon a despatch which he had just received from the exiled Prince Charles, and to which he was about to reply, when suddenly in the open door appeared the pale and agitated face of Sir Tancred Beete.

"The Kornists are marching upon us!" he exclaimed.

Mr. Onion sprang to his feet.

"What?" he ejaculated.

"It is true!" cried Sir Tancred. "Come and watch them advance."

Seizing Mr. Onion's hand, he hurried from the tent. The excitement which prevailed in the camp is quite beyond my powers of description. The drums were

beating the call to arms, while officers and men flew hither and thither, as the ranks quickly formed in order.

"Stryng Beane," said Lord Atherton Lettuce, hastily buckling on his sword as he approached Mr. Onion, "has done exactly what I supposed he would. I thought he would not do battle with us in an honorable manner."

"I never knew," said Lord Irish Potato. "that twenty-one days constituted a month."

"Look!" cried Sir Tancred Beete, "Sir Stryng is riding beside Greene Korne."

"They will be upon us in a few minutes," answered Lord Lettuce, and he rode away to join his command.

It is necessary that a few explanations should be made regarding the movements of the Kornists.

Their head-quarters were, as I have said, around Fort Kobbe, at the northern end of Esculentsia, and close beside the river. The Carrottites occupied the southern extremity of the city, their camp extending far beyond the walls, and being approachable in several directions, but by land only. Of this circumstance Sir Stryng was resolved to avail himself.

Accordingly, allowing three weeks to elapse, in order that no suspicion of his dishonorable intentions might enter the minds of the Carrottites, he, in the dark hours of midnight, silently stole from Fort Kobbe, and by a circuitous path led his troops to the outskirts of the Carrottite encampment.

While he is approaching through the mists of the early morning let us glance at the army of our friends.

Surely never was a more gallant-looking body of Vegetables drawn up in battle array.

First of all appeared the onions, who, as archers, were placed in the front ranks. There were two companies of these,—one clad in suits of silvery-white silk; the other in pink satin uniform, with high caps of dark-green velvet. Several banners waved above their heads, on one of which glittered in golden letters these lines:—

Each onion's heart is bounding,
 As he murmurs with delight,
 "For thee, beloved Prince Charlie,
 For thee alone we fight."

The cabbages followed next, and their banner was so exceedingly heavy with golden embroidery that it required four Vegetables to bear it. Below a picture of two rapiers was inscribed, "Our hearts are impervious to fear."

The fourth company were the carrots, in orange-colored suits and cocked hats, from which waved long, feathery, green plumes, and their standard of green and orange silk was deeply fringed with silver. It also bore a stanza:—

Clan Carrotte is a happy band,
 It has no king but Charlie!
 In all the wide and smiling land
 It owns no king but Charlie!
 Ursurping corn it laughs to scorn,
 And cheers its own king Charlie!
 And makes each green and silly bean
 Cry out, "Long live King Charlie!"

Time would fail me to describe in detail the appearance of the other Vegetables: the tomatoes, red and yellow; the radishes, in their handsome pink coats; the graceful and dignified cucumbers; the lettuce, with a standard declaring that their heads were cool; and the beets, whose war-cry, "Bound to beat!" resounded on the air.

And there were also the turnips, the cauliflower, and the Irish potatoes. This latter company was mounted on white rabbits, gayly trapped with white and gold, and its banner, one of the handsomest in the ranks, announced that shots would go in one eye and out at another.

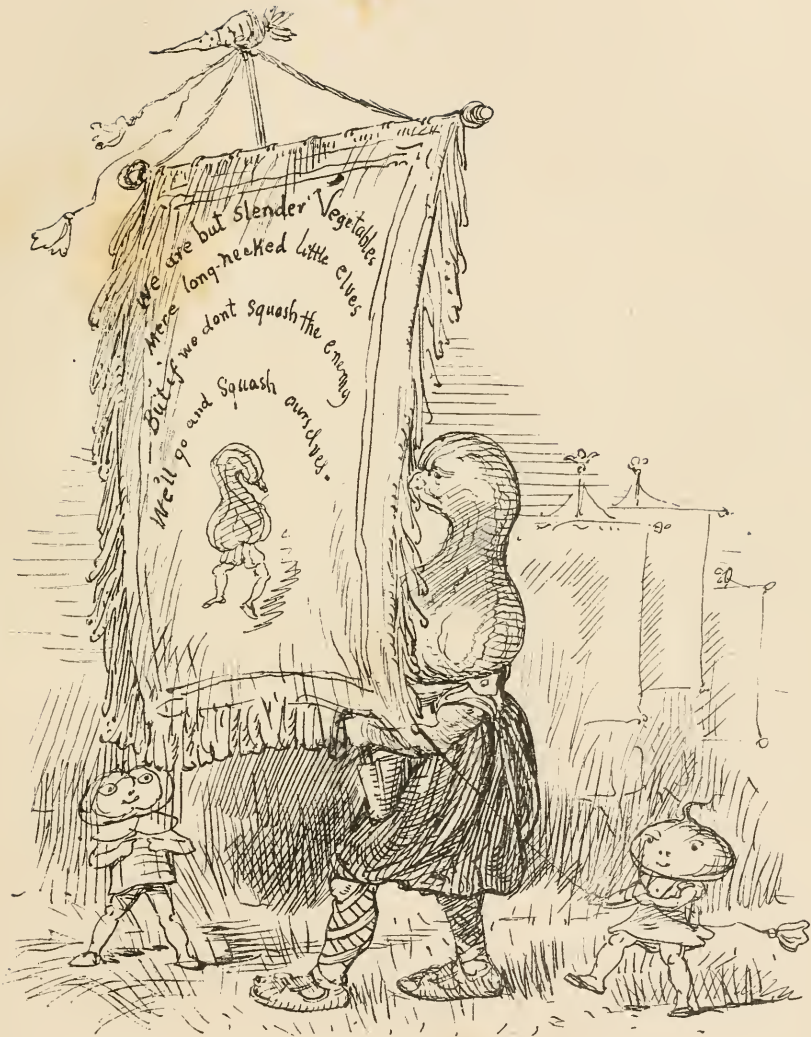
A noticeable company were the pumpkins, in their bright coats of yellow velvet; and the squashes presented a gallant appearance. A huge silken standard borne by our friend, the crooked-neck squash, displayed these lines:—

We are but slender Vegetables,
Mere long-necked little elves;
But if we don't squash the enemy
We'll go and squash ourselves!

Then appeared the peas; the peppers, in jaunty scarlet attire; and, last of all, the celery, armed with spears and rapiers.

Well might Count French Turnippe, glancing over the noble figures of his Vegetables, utter an exclamation of proud satisfaction.

Near and nearer drew the forces of the Kornists. They halted, and the next moment a shell fell into the midst of the Carrottite ranks. The battle was now fairly begun.



The Squash banner.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

4

Bang! bang! went musket and cannon, and clouds of smoke rolled upward to the sky. Slash! the sabres cut through the air, and then peal after peal of music sounded, the clangor of the trumpets mingling with the groans and cries of the wounded and dying, and the cheers of the brave-hearted officers, as they plunged into the thickest of the fight.

The army surgeons, with their little canteens slung across their shoulders, rode hither and thither, carrying water to the wounded, or removing them to the hospital tents; while the men, regardless of all danger, pressed onward to the front.

Never was a battle more valiantly fought; but ere the day was half over it became perfectly plain to every Vegetable that the Kornists would be defeated. The balls from the Carrottite army's muskets and cannons had swept like a devastating hurricane through their ranks; the animals they rode had fallen beneath the arrows, and their dead lay in heaps upon the ground. Still Stryng Beane, who, whatever his faults might be, was, nevertheless, a brave soldier, galloped forward at the head of his troops, and cheered his wearied Vegetables on. But his efforts were unavailing, and as the city clock tolled the midnight hour, the Kornist army laid down its arms, and Stryng Beane surrendered his sword to Count French Turnippe, the commander of the Carrottite forces.

That Vegetable, with true courtesy, had sent another officer to receive it; but Sir Stryng declared that he would not place his weapon in the hand of an inferior, and the

Count was forced, in spite of his unwillingness, to perform the ceremony of taking it.

As he advanced toward the spot where the bean was standing, a cry of "Long live King Carrotte!" rose on the calm night air, and the bands struck up "Hail Charlie, our monarch!"—an air which had been composed by Lord Walter Tomato, in anticipation of the probable result of the battle.

The bean delivered his sword to the Count with a nonchalant air, and as if he was conferring a favor upon him; but the true dignity and courtesy displayed by the turnip awoke admiration in the breasts of even the Kornist soldiers.

Cheer after cheer rent the air, and the name of Count Turnippe was mingled with that of his prince.

III.

The signal victory of the Carrottites on the day of the battle struck the death-knell to all hopes of the Kornist Party. Parliament shortly after rendered a decision in favor of Prince Charles, and a season of rejoicing among the Vegetables began.

This reached its height upon the day when the young Prince, exiled since childhood to Fruitania, set foot upon his native shore. A procession, four miles in length, escorted him from the vessel by which he had arrived,

through a succession of streets, where at every step they passed beneath triumphal arches, to the Royal Palace of the Leaves.

Week after week of gayety followed. Nothing that could tend to demonstrate the intense affection of the Vegetables for their "boy king," as they loved to call him, was left undone, and the people lived in a sort of delirium of happiness.

But the festival, which far exceeded all others in splendor, was the coronation of the young monarch. Fortunate for us is it that the early chroniclers of Vegetabilia recorded an account of this magnificent ceremony.

On the morning of the thirty-first of October the grand coronation hall, adjoining the Palace of the Leaves, presented a scene of unrivalled brilliancy. There was assembled all that was most noble and beautiful in Vegetabilia. The grave counsellor of state stood side by side with the laughing young courtier, and the white plume of the maiden nodded in unison with the graver crest that adorned the warrior's helmet.

A throne of pure white ivory occupied one end of the vast apartment, and on either side of the twelve steps which led to it stood twelve tomatoes, clothed in scarlet velvet, and bearing banners of white silk, on which appeared the emblems of the twenty-four provinces, of which Vegetabilia was composed.

In the centre of the hall was an ivory table, covered with a cloth of white velvet, heavily fringed with silver, and before this stood three cucumbers in state robes of green

satin, and wearing long curling wigs, which, according to the custom of the times, were stained a beautiful golden tint. Behind them appeared six turnip-radishes, bearing standards of cloth of gold, on which was displayed the arms of the House of Carrotte.

Through the high-arched windows of richly colored glass the morning sunlight stole, and threw a mellow radiance over the entire scene, lighting up the fretted roof of blue and gold, the waving banners, the nodding plumes and flashing jewels, and the eager faces of the waiting courtiers.

A thrill ran through the vast assembly as suddenly a single bugle-blast smote the air. Then a peal of music sounded and a deafening cheer burst from the lips of the Vegetables :—

“Long live the king !”

Slowly up the hall, preceded by heralds, squires, and trumpeters, walked the monarch. His youthful brow was flushed with pride and triumph as his dark-blue eyes swept the almost worshipping faces of his subjects.

A deathlike silence fell upon the Vegetables as the young prince knelt beside the cucumbers. Then another trumpet-blast sounded, and three ears of corn, the dukes of Kernel, Silke, and Huske, bearing a golden crown, advanced with measured step, and, kneeling, deposited their precious burden upon the table.

“Carrotte is king !” pronounced one of the cucumbers.

“Long live the king !” responded the three ears of corn.



Prince Carotte entering the Coronation Hall.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

H

V

Then a third burst of triumphant music echoed through the hall, and in the portal appeared a herald, a radish, attired in a suit of pink velvet, and wearing a white mouse-skin hat, plumed and looped with jewels.

Behind him, mounted on a richly caparisoned snow-white rabbit, was Sir Tancred Beete, clothed in complete armor, and bearing a lance and shield encrusted with rubies and diamonds. On his right was Mr. Onion, in pale pink satin, laced with gold and embroidered with pearls; on his left, Lord Walter Tomato, in scarlet velvet studded with diamonds. They were followed by a long train of squires and pages, fantastically, though gorgeously, arrayed in the costumes of other days.

Advancing to the side of the prince, the herald, in a clear, deep voice, said solemnly:—

“If any Vegetable, of what degree so ever, high or low, shall deny or gainsay our Sovereign Lord, King Charles of Vegetableria, to be lawful monarch of Vegetableria, here is his champion, who saith that he lieth, being ready in person to combat with him, and in this quarrel will adventure his life against him on what day soever he shall be appointed!”

Once, twice, thrice, was this challenge repeated, and, as the herald ceased speaking, Sir Tancred hurled his steel gauntlet to the floor. It struck upon the marble with a clear, metallic ring that thrilled through every heart.

After a minute the herald stooped, picked it up, and handed it to a squire, who kissed it and presented it to the champion; the bugles blew another inspiring blast, and, fol-

lowed by their retinue, the beet, onion, and tomato backed their rabbits down the hall and out at the open door.

A second cucumber now commanded the king to rise, and, after he had done so, administered an oath, charging him to preserve unity among his subjects, and to rule with wisdom and justice.

The carrot repeated the oath in a clear, distinct voice, and then once more bent his knee, while the three ears of corn placed the crown upon his brow.

The third cucumber advanced toward the people.

“Carrotte is king!” he exclaimed.

And all the Vegetables responded in chorus:—

“Long live the king!”

The young monarch then arose and walked alone to the throne, the twenty-four tomatoes falling on their knees as he ascended the steps. Trumpets and clarions flourished again, and up between the long lines of courtiers advanced Celery, Marquis of Sandringham, followed by two scarlet-coated peppers, bearing a golden sceptre richly studded with jewels. They approached the throne; the Marquis received the sceptre from the peppers, who remained on bended knee while he placed it in the hand of the king, and then all three Vegetables gracefully withdrew.

One by one the nobles now advanced, each Vegetable, according to his rank, kneeling to swear allegiance to his sovereign; and among those who hastened to perform this homage appeared Sir Stryng Beane, resplendent in a court dress of green satin, laced with silver, and sparkling with diamonds and emeralds.

There were some who whispered that his conduct would have seemed more honorable had he followed the young Greene Korne to his Castle of Stalkes, whither he had retired after his defeat; but to these idle babblers the bean paid little heed. The former leader of the Kornists was converted into a most enthusiastic Carrottite.

He flitted about among the courtiers, ever and anon pausing to seize the hand of some Vegetable of whom he had once been a bitter enemy, and always hovering in the vicinity of the throne; and when at last the young monarch led the way to the great saloon where the Coronation Feast was spread, he grasped the arm of Lord Irish Potato, and with him entered the room.

The banqueting-hall presented a scene of unrivalled beauty. Countless waxen tapers shed their brilliant light over long rows of tables, whose splendid furniture flashed with a thousand precious gems.

Pages and pursuivants, in every variety of gorgeous dress, waited upon the banqueters; and from the lofty galleries beauteous ladies watched the dazzling picture below them.

With the banquet ended the ceremony of Prince Carrotte's coronation.

But we cannot consent to part from our friends of Vegetabilia without glancing at their future career.

Mr. Onion became Premier, and by his superior talents gained the title of the greatest statesman of the age; Lord Irish Potato was appointed Lord High Chancellor, and Lord Atherton Lettuce, Keeper of the Great Vegetable Seal.

Sir Tancred Beete and Count French Turnippe, in their chosen profession, the military, also won renown; but Sir Stryng Beane, although he eagerly sought to obtain distinction as a politician, was never able to accomplish his design, living despised as a sycophant, and dying regretted by none.

II

THE PRINCESS

THE PRINCESS.



I.

"I am heartily glad," said the Earl of Spitzbergen, "that the hostilities which have for so long existed between Fruitania and Nuttanny are about to come to an end. The two powers have been in hot water long enough. For the past fifteen years nothing has been the topic of court conversation but the quarrels which are continually taking place between King George and King Francis, and I, for one, long for another theme. I repeat, Sir Harold, I am heartily glad that the hostilities are about to come to an end."

"And I shall be glad also," replied the fruit addressed as Sir Harold, a tall, slim banana, dressed in a handsome suit of yellow satin, and wearing a curling wig liberally sprinkled with diamond powder, "if they really cease; but my mind misgives me that the trouble is not yet over."

"I think you are mistaken in believing that," said the earl. "The marriage of Stephanie with the Prince of Baracoa being once consummated, peace, of course, will reign."

"Ay," said the banana, slowly, "during a short period of time, I grant; but not forever."

"Why, what in the world do you mean?" queried the earl.

"Listen!" answered the banana. "After the death of the two old kings, the Prince of Baracoa will ascend the throne of Nuttanny, and Stephanie that of Fruitania, will they not?"

"Most certainly," replied the earl.

"Well," continued Sir Harold, "then you have a pretty state of things! A husband and wife each the ruler of separate nations, and, above all, nations which never could, can, or will agree. Do you suppose harmony will exist long between them? Because I do not. It is my firm opinion that Fruitania and Nuttanny will eventually go to war."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed the earl, rolling up his eyes, and taking two or three pinches of snuff in rapid succession. "My dear Harold, if you will allow me to say so, your idea is utterly preposterous. Why, don't you see that as soon as George and Francis are dead the two kingdoms will immediately become consolidated in one grand empire?"

"No, I do not see it at all," answered the banana. "Fruitania will never consent to lose its individuality."

"But I tell you it will be obliged to, whether it is willing or not!" cried the earl, excitedly. "Why, the very reason that induced King George to cancel Stephanie's engagement with the Prince of Klyngstone, and betroth her to Baracoa, was the fact that he foresaw she would ultimately become an empress."

"I know it," replied Sir Harold, shaking his head; "and I am sincerely sorry that the king is cherishing such an idea.

for, should he but drop a hint of it, the people would immediately begin to murmur."

"Oh, you let the people alone," said the earl, laughing; "they are well enough contented with the king's choice of a husband for the princess." Then, seeing the banana frown, he added, half quizzingly, "I really believe, Harold, you regret that Stephanie is not to be betrothed to the Prince of Klyngstone to-day, instead of to Baracoa."

"Yes, I do, Spitzbergen," said Sir Harold, rising from his chair, and taking two or three strides up and down the room. "Henry of Klyngstone has, I consider, been used quite shamefully. He is a prince of the blood royal of Fruitania, the nephew of our sovereign, and by every right seems entitled to the hand of the princess. Beside, do you not think that he, being a native of this country, is better calculated to help govern it than a foreigner, and a foreigner, too, whose early prejudices must all be against it? Do you not, in your heart, believe that the mass of the people would be better pleased to see a Fruit upon the Fruitish throne than a stranger Nut?"

"Well, now you are talking folly," cried Spitzbergen, again laughing. "Why, my dear Harold, what do you suppose the Fruits would do if, at this moment, the king should annul Stephanie's engagement with Baracoa and rebetroth her to Prince Henry? They would not be grateful, I can tell you; for there is not the slightest doubt but that the Nuts, with a whole army of Vegetables to help them, would pour down like a flood on Fruitania."

"Ah," said the banana, gravely, "the mistake lies in

ever promising Stephanie to Klyngstone, and then transferring her to the Nut; and, sooner or later, the people will see this fact."

"Well, I will not dispute you in your own house," rejoined the earl. "It would not be polite. But just listen to this, in yesterday's 'Leaf and Blossom,'" he added, taking a newspaper from his pocket, "and you will hear what the people think about this marriage;" and he read aloud:—

Stephanie Henrietta Elizabeth, Crown Princess of Fruitania and the adjacent isles, has long been privately betrothed to the Prince of Baracoa, heir-apparent to the Nuttish throne. To-morrow the ceremony of publicly pledging her hand to him will take place at the Royal Palace of Peachingbloom, in the presence of all the most distinguished peers and ladies of the realm. It will doubtless be a day of rejoicing throughout the kingdom. The Princess Stephanie is in the first bloom of youth and health, beautiful, accomplished, and greatly beloved by all her subjects. She was formerly betrothed to her cousin, the Prince of Klyngstone; but, as the prosperity of the country would not be greatly increased by a marriage with His Royal Highness, it was deemed expedient to cancel that engagement and enter into a new one with the Prince of Baracoa. This was an eminently wise step, as the union will bring about a reconciliation between Nuttanny and Fruitania, who have both been too long at variance. The Prince of Baracoa is like the princess, young, talented, and accomplished, and his charm of manner is greatly enhanced by a dash of eccentricity. He has a deep and romantic attachment for the princess, having fallen in love from seeing her painted portrait, and she returns his affection in full. The marriage will be productive of great happiness to themselves and the country alike.

"Now there is a paragraph," continued the earl, as he folded the paper, "which puts things as they really stand,

save with regard to Stephanie's attachment for Baracoa. The truth is, that she has never seen so much as a picture of him, and does not know whether she will like him or not; but it is just as well the people should think she adores him."

Sir Harold sighed and shook his head.

"Do you know," he inquired, "what the Prince of Klyngstone said, when he received the king's message informing him his engagement with Stephanie was dissolved?"

"No, I do not," answered the earl. "The truth is, Sir Harold, — I know this through my daughter, — the prince has never deigned to make any reply to his majesty's communication."

"Great Cherrytwigs!" exclaimed the banana, raising both hands; "then he has not consented to being thrust aside, by any means."

"Oh, nobody will pay any attention to him," said the earl. "Stephanie will be married to Baracoa, whether Klyngstone likes it or not. I should think, if he had any sense, he would know that princesses are expected to wed those who will be of most advantage to the nation. But, of course, he must naturally feel chagrined. To come so near to a throne, and then have it slip through one's fingers, is rather aggravating. It would be much worse, however, if he and Stephanie had ever met and fallen in love; but, luckily, they have never seen each other. I am glad, for the princess' sake, things are as they are. But, to change the conversation, Sir Harold, at what time do you propose to start for the palace?"

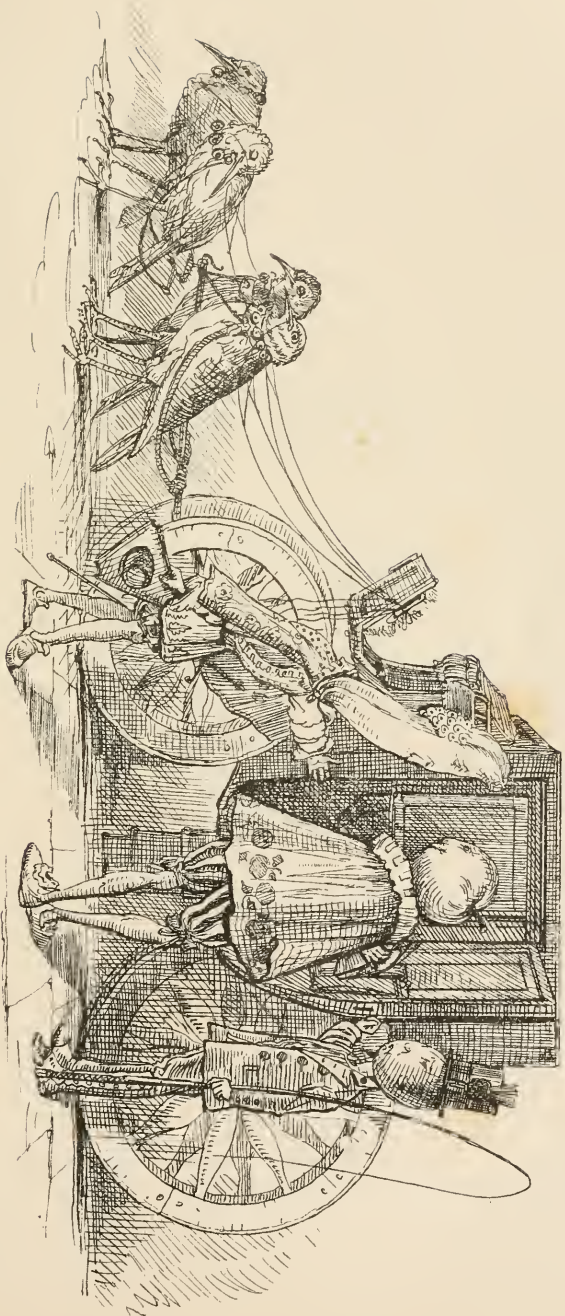
"I do not think we shall be too early if we start at once," replied the banana, consulting his watch. "I hear the carriage at the door."

Sir Harold arose and ushered his guest to the hall, where a groom in waiting held ready their satin short cloaks and cocked hats. The banana's brougham, an elegant little affair, lined with green satin, and drawn by four bright-eyed greenlets, stood before the entrance. A spruce-looking gooseberry, in a very high cockaded hat, let down the steps, Sir Harold and his friend entered the carriage, the steps were replaced with a bang and a rattle, and off cantered the birds, their bright harness flashing in the sunshine, and the little bells suspended around their necks tinkling musically.

A quarter of an hour's drive, and they had left the suburbs where Sir Harold's residence was situated, and entered the city of Peachingbloom. Vehicles thronged every street. The Earl of Spitzbergen was quite happy. With the curtains raised, and the windows lowered, he sat smiling and bowing at every one he knew, commenting, meanwhile, in a low voice, on their costumes, their manner, and the splendor of their equipages.

Turning a corner, the brougham came to a standstill, and the gooseberry, dismounting, informed Sir Harold that the throng of carriages was so dense it was impossible to approach nearer the palace. Sir Harold and the earl therefore alighted, and pressed their way on foot to the door of Peachingbloom.

Arriving there, they were ushered into an immense



*-The Earl of Spitzbergen shown to the
brougham by Sir Harold Banana.*

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

1

saloon, which occupied the whole ground-floor of the palace's eastern wing. The scene which here met the eye was brilliant in the extreme. Daylight had been excluded, and a thousand waxen tapers shed an almost dazzling light over the apartment. One end of the room was occupied by a sort of raised platform, canopied with damask of ruby and gold,—the royal colors,—and covered by a velvet carpet of the same brilliant tints. Upon this stood a desk-shaped table of ebony, curiously carved, and inlaid with mother-of-pearl; and on it was placed a pen and ink-horn, a roll of parchment, and a large volume bound in red velvet. The air was heavy with delicate perfumes. The walls were hung with festoons of richly colored silks, interspersed with banners, bearing the royal arms of Nuttany and Fruitania in every variety of tint and design. On either side of the room were long rows of cushioned benches, and these were nearly filled by the Fruits and distinguished foreigners, whose rank entitled them to witness the betrothal ceremony of the princess.

"This is a very happy occasion," said the Earl of Spitzbergen, dropping into a seat beside Lord Malayga Graype. "Every one's countenance seems to be wreathed with smiles."

"Well they may be," replied the grape. "Have you heard what the Prince of Baracoa gives Her Royal Highness for a wedding present?"

"No," answered the earl; "but that it is something rare, I will wager."

"Oh, 'tis a noble gift," said the grape. "The whole

of the Valley of Peanuts, besides twenty-one million stems. Is not that a princely offering?"

"Indeed, yes," answered the earl; "but the lovely Stephanie is worthy of all."

"Of more, much more," said a pineapple, who sat near by. "Never so sweet a creature lived as our dear princess."

"Well, she will have enough if Nuttanny and Fruitania ever become united under one government," said Spitzbergen; "and I think that, ultimately, they will."

"Oh, there's no doubt about that fact," answered the pineapple. "This marriage will be the salvation of our nation."

"There," thought the earl, "I would give a hundred seeds to have had Harold hear that speech." Aloud, he said, "Have you seen the prince yet?"

"No," replied the pineapple. "In fact, no one has but the king. He is eccentric, you know, and has taken a fancy to remain entirely secluded until the moment of the betrothal. He actually travels without a retinue."

"Hush!" exclaimed Lord Malayga Graype; "they come!"

As he spoke a blast of trumpets sounded, the crystal doors of the saloon were thrown wide open, and a long train of Fruits filed slowly into the room.

At its head walked the king. George the Fourth, of Fruitania, was a tall, portly peach, with ruddy cheeks, pleasant eyes, and a wide, good-humored-looking mouth. On this occasion a broad smile illumined every feature, and,



George IV, King of Britain.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

as he passed slowly up the saloon leaning on the arm of his cousin, Alexis, Duke of Aprikott, it was plainly visible that this betrothal of his daughter was to him eminently satisfactory.

The Princess Stephanie followed her father. This young Fruit, upon whose action the fate of her country seemed to be balanced, was now in her seventeenth year. We have learned through the conversation of the earl and his friends that she was exceedingly lovely, yet never had she seemed so beautiful as now. Over a skirt of pale yellow velvet she wore a flowing robe of crimson, elaborately braided with jewels, and confined to the form by a satin bodice, laced so as to display an inner vest buttoned to the throat by clasps of diamonds. The sleeves of this vest, which hung loosely from the arm, were slashed and caught up in several places by the same brilliant gems, and revealed underneath cuffs of lace, which corresponded to a fine, triple-plaited ruffle that, fastened closely around the princess' neck, fell to a depth of several inches on her shoulder. Her golden hair was dressed according to the fashion of the times,—high upon her head in pyramids of puffs, from which two or three ringlets were allowed to escape; and these were liberally interspersed with chains and festoons of jewels, the whole being surmounted by a tiara of diamonds,—also a gift of her royal lover,—from which flowed to the ground a veil of the finest tissue, yet so interwoven with golden threads that it appeared to be entirely composed of that precious metal. The excitement of the moment lent a beautiful blush to her rounded

cheeks, and her eyes flashed and softened with varying emotions.

Her train was borne by two of the fairest maidens of Fruitania, — Lady Messina Lemmonne, and Lady Ethelreda Apple, daughter of the Earl of Spitzbergen. Then followed several other lovely young Fruits, the princess' ladies of honor; and behind them appeared Cherrie, Viscount of Oxheart, the Grand Master of Wedding Ceremonies of Fruitania, in his full official regalia, accompanied by four of the highest peers of the realm, — Orange, Duke of Valencia, Apple, Marquis of Gyllyflower, Count Bartlette Paire, and the Duke of Nuttmeggemellonnedale, — with a whole retinue of other Fruits, who belonged to the train of the royal family.

They proceeded up the apartment slowly, pausing before the ebony table, where the princess knelt upon a cushion of ruby-colored satin, the king, gentle fruits, and ladies grouping themselves about her; then a second blast of trumpets sounded, the great crystal doors again swung backwards, admitting an individual at sight of whom every one started, and then, turning, gazed wonderingly at his neighbor.

The person who thus attracted so much attention, was a tall, awkward cocoanut, with a savage-looking mouth and shaggy brows hanging low over a pair of dark, ferocious eyes. He was attired in a suit of dusty brown cloth, which, indeed, fitted his ungainly form like his skin, for he seemed to have been melted and poured into it; and low brown shoes, fastened with jewelled



The Princess

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

G

buckles, which contrasted strangely with those at his knees, the latter being plain black ones. A plaid neck-cloth was tied around his neck, which seemed to be fearfully tanned, and ruffles of rare lace hung over his hard, brown hands. Stockings of faded coffee-colored silk, a ruffled shirt-bosom, and a vest of flowered satin, completed his costume. He carried a black and gold snuff-box, into which he continually dipped his fingers.

John Joseph Ferdinand Alphonse, Prince of Baracoa, — for it was indeed he, — advanced with a rapid, shambling gait up between the rows of astonished Fruits, straight to the side of King George; but there he paused abruptly, for the princess suddenly uttered a faint cry of dismay and burst into a flood of tears. The king's countenance grew crimson. He sprang forward, and, raising her in his arms, endeavored to hide her agitated face on his shoulder; but the astonished cocoanut, who had expected to see her radiant with smiles and blushes of delight at his appearance, blurted out at the top of his voice: —

“May I be scalped by savages, and my skeleton made into a dipper, if she isn't crying because she's got to marry me!”

This breach of etiquette on the part of the cocoanut convulsed the Fruits. Bananas threw themselves upon the floor, and shrieked with laughter; pineapples found it convenient to cover their faces with their handkerchiefs; gooseberries and currants rolled about under the chairs and tables; grapes walked around excitedly; oranges sat still and made audible remarks about the “great dipper;” lemons spoke in low tones

of the "little dipper;" plums giggled; quinces looked sourly at each other; the figs winked at the strawberries, and the strawberries winked at the figs; barberries coughed; huckleberries sneezed; raspberries grinned; blackberries groaned; in short, a general excitement prevailed. Even the king could not restrain his mirth, but laughed heartily until his eyes again rested on the princess.

She had ceased to weep, and now stood erect; but over her face was spread a deadly pallor, and her uplifted eyes burnt with an unnatural fire. The old king was much alarmed; but the princess, perceiving the expression of affright upon his face, smiled, and with an apparent effort re-knelt upon the cushion.

"My love," said the king, "are you quite able to go through with this ceremony?"

"Oh, yes," replied the princess, "pray proceed at once."

The king hesitated a moment, but, perceiving that she really wished it, motioned to the Viscount of Oxheart, who, at once opening his book, commenced the ceremony which in Fruitania always takes place when one of the royal family is betrothed.

First, the cocoanut was desired to kneel beside the princess. This request he succeeded in obeying after a great deal of hard work; for, being large and clumsy, he found it a rather difficult task to kneel, and he lost one of his slippers several times during the attempt. But when he was safely down on the cushion he felt at ease, and replied to the questions put to him with great composure. They were regarding his age, country, and title; and after they were answered the



The Prince of Baraëoa.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

6

princess was questioned. Her replies were made in a low but distinct tone, and with such perfect self-possession, that even her father began to doubt that the sudden burst of tears was occasioned by dismay at sight of the prince.

Poor little princess! She rose from her kneeling posture when the last question had been asked and answered; and stood with a face pallid as marble, while the Viscount of Oxheart, unrolling the betrothal contract, spread it out upon the table. The Prince of Baracoa subscribed his name in a rough, uncultivated hand, and the golden pen was passed to her. She began to write, had nearly finished, and the Duke of Valencia, the first of the four peers who was to affix his signature as witness, was already dipping his quill in the ink-horn, when, suddenly raising her eyes as though by an irresistible impulse, she turned them on the cocoanut. The princess paused. She saw the great black orbs goggling at her; the long, lank arms extended as if to embrace her. She gazed at the prince a moment with an expression of disgust, then, half-fainting, she staggered across the room.

“No! no!” gasped she, tearing the ring from her finger and hurling it to the floor, “I cannot marry that horrible Nut! I cannot! I cannot! It will kill me!”

Words fail to accurately describe the scene which took place as the poor little peach uttered these passionate exclamations. If I say that the Fruits were excited, I use a very mild expression. They were more than excited,—they were mad. Yes, mad with anger—Crazy with rage at the unfortunate prince.

“Wed her!” cried a tall, red banana, drawing his sword

from its sheath and brandishing it high above his head; "Wed her! Nay, ere our sweet princess should be united to such a Nut, this trusty blade should pierce my bosom!"

"It shall not be!" shrieked a huckleberry, in black silk stockings and pumps, and remarkably wide lace ruffles; "though I be but small I am valiant, and this marriage shall not be!"

"Let the Vegetables come on!" yelled a russet apple. "What care I? Ay, let the Vegetables come on! For this sweet princess' sake I would gladly pierce my core with my own rapier. Shall I, then, fear to face a foe in battle for her sake? Nay, let the Vegetables come on!"

"Out, ye villain!" roared a fat, purple plum, climbing upon a chair, and seizing the cocoanut by the collar. "Out, ye villain! Darest stay in the presence of the Princess Stephanie?" and he would have proceeded to forcibly eject the cocoanut from the palace; but, unfortunately, being much smaller than the prince, he was unable to move him a step. Several oranges, however, caught hold of him, and, dragging him to the door, were about to cast him out, when the king exclaimed:—

"Hold, there! Release the prince! I beg Your Royal Highness to come hither. At my side you are protected."

But the frightened cocoanut, although the oranges "held," and let go his collar, did not stop to receive the protection of the king. He rushed frantically through the door and down the palace steps, and, with the plum in full pursuit, started off in the direction of a forest which loomed up in the far distance. Such a race as those two ran! But



Flight of the Prince of Baracoa from the palace.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

TILDEN LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

6

the cocoanut, having the most breath, got the better of his pursuer, and the plum was forced, although reluctantly, to give up the chase and return to the palace.

There he found every one in a state of the most intense excitement. The princess, supported by two maids-of-honor, sat upon a couch, and by her side Sir Scarlet Tomato, the Vegetablerian Ambassador, was kneeling, endeavoring to quiet her apprehensions by assuring her that he would use all his influence to prevent King Carrotte from taking up arms against Fruitania. But his efforts were unavailing. The princess could only shake her head and moan: "I have plunged my father's kingdom into ruin by my folly, and in his old age he will be harassed by warfare and insult!"

The king stood earnestly conversing with Sir Harold Banana, while the courtiers were scattered about the room in groups, discussing the scene which had just been enacted. At length the king spoke, taking the princess' cold little hand in his.

"Go, my dearest daughter, to your apartments," he said gently, "and cease to grieve about this matter. We can easily appease the wrath of the king of Nuttanny. Nay," seeing her about to speak, "but we can. Can we not, Sir Harold?"

"I think so, sire," replied the banana, in a low, calm tone.

"You hear?" cried the king; "Sir Harold agrees with me. So dry your eyes, my Stephanie, and be no longer sorrowful. You should never have been betrothed to Baracoa, had I dreamed he would be so repulsive to you."

The now quieted princess arose. She was about to speak; but as she gazed around at the circle of sympathetic faces, her emotion choked her utterance, and, turning hastily, she left the room. She was followed at once by her maids-of-honor, whom the king instructed to cheer and comfort her. As the door closed after them the courtiers clustered around their monarch.

"And do you really think, sire, that you can appease the wrath of the king of Nuttanny?" queried the Earl of Spitzbergen.

"Ah, my lord," replied King George, "I anticipate the worst; but Sir Harold advised me to quiet my daughter's fears. As to myself, I believe there will be a battle."

"Come peace, come war," cried the red banana, who had flourished his sword so gallantly, "let not the princess suffer!"

"No," exclaimed a gooseberry, "rather let us per-r-r-ish!"

"I will freely shed," said the huckleberry, in black silk stockings and pumps, "my last drop of blood in her cause."

"And I," cried a strawberry, "to borrow the words of my ancestor, the poet, —

Would gladly pluck my hull off
To save her from a sigh!"

"I do not think," remarked Sir Harold Banana, "that there is one person among us who would not gladly lose his life for the sake of the princess."

"Let 'em come on," interrupted the plum, who had kept

silent only to regain his breath after his long run, — “I only want ’em to, that’s all !”

“My dear subjects,” said the king, “I am gratified beyond measure to find that you are so much attached to your monarch, or, rather, to his daughter.”

“To you both !” cried a lemon.

“I know that great difficulties are to be anticipated,” continued the king ; “yet I cannot relinquish all hope of triumphing over our enemies.”

“I will use all my influence, and I venture to say that it is considerable,” said Sir Scarlet Tomato, “to persuade King Carrotte not to unite with the Nuts. He is under some obligations to them, for they aided in repelling the attacks of the Grasses on Vegetableria ; yet I am positive he will not help them unless he believes their cause a just one.”

“Hang the Nuts,” cried the purple plum, “on the trees where they belong ! Let ’em come on, I say ! Let ’em come on !”

II.

Prince Ferdinand of Baracoa did not return to the palace. King George despatched a mounted troop of figs to the forest where he had been last seen, with instructions to tender apologies for the ill-treatment he had received at the hands of the Fruits ; but, although they scoured the woods in all directions, they could find no trace of him, and so were obliged to give up the pursuit.

In about a week, however, a communication was received from King Francis, father of Prince Ferdinand, which alarmed all Fruitania. It was to the effect that, if the princess' hand was not within two months bestowed upon the Prince of Baracoa, the Nuts, with an army of Vegetables to assist them, would march against the Fruits.

On hearing this threat, Sir Scarlet Tomato stated that Nuttanny had, but a few days since, violated a treaty with Vegetabilia, and that therefore the Vegetables were no longer under obligations to the Nuts, but would, on the contrary, transfer their allegiance to Fruitania. Yet King George was troubled. He could see naught but warfare for his country. The unfortunate exclamation of the cocoanut, on the day of the betrothal, had excited the mirth of the Fruits, and many sarcastic remarks had been circulated among them. This conduct was decidedly insulting, and King George felt that no apologies could excuse it.

But perhaps the princess, was still more unhappy than her father. To her, and to her alone, she felt, was all the trouble owing. She had acted indiscreetly in so openly expressing her repugnance towards the cocoanut. Yet how was it possible to conceal it? Solemn vows she had already pledged him; and these, in honor, ought not to be broken. It was plainly her duty to marry the prince; yet the very thought of such a thing caused her to shiver with horror and dread. Still, the welfare of her country certainly demanded the sacrifice. She spoke these thoughts to her father several times; but he only replied by in-

dignantly declaring she should never wed the cocoanut; and so the matter lay.

One day, as the king sat alone, pondering upon the difficulties of the situation, a bright idea flashed across his mind. There was under the dominion of Fruitania a certain island called Shamrock. This was a possession of some importance, having been ceded to the Fruits during the Grasso-Fruitish war, more than a hundred years before our story commences. It was situated midway between Fruitania and Nuttany, and contained a fort of immense proportions, whose guns had more than once inspired terror in the hearts of Fruitania's foes. Now, the Grasses were on anything but friendly terms with the Nuts. In fact, there was danger that at any moment they might declare war against them. No Grassish vessel, however, could attempt to enter Nuttish waters without sailing beneath the fire of those terrible cannon. The Island of Shamrock would be, therefore, a valuable auxiliary to the Nuts in repelling the attacks of their enemy, could they but obtain possession of it, and King George's idea was to cede it to them on condition that the Prince of Baracoa would relinquish all claim to Stephanie's hand.

Hastily summoning his premier, Watta-Mellonne, he laid the plan before him.

"Sire," replied the premier, "the project is an excellent one, and let me advise you to despatch an ambassador to Nuttanny at once."

"I desire to do so," answered the king; "but am puzzled whom to send."

"You should not be, sire," said the watermelon, "when there is near you such a fruit as Apple, Earl of Spitzbergen."

"True!" exclaimed the king. "He is a fruit of integrity."

"And of shrewdness also," said the premier. "If any one, sire, can successfully manage such a delicate affair as the adjustment of the difficulties existing between this country and Nuttanny, it is Lord Spitzbergen."

"Then he shall be despatched at once!" said the king.

Upon the next day, therefore, the apple set out for Nuttemberg, the capital of the Nuttish dominions. He travelled with great magnificence. Railroads were things unknown in those days, and all journeys were made either in wheeled vehicles or upon the backs of animals. The apple chose the former mode of conveyance. He rode in a low, two-wheeled chariot-shaped carriage, lined with scarlet velvet, and elaborately decorated with gold ornaments, and his coat-of-arms, two crossed apple-stems, surmounted by a helmet and rapier. The harness of the eight rabbits, by which it was drawn, was also heavily trimmed with gold, and each animal bore above his head a plume of crimson feathers.

On either side of this equipage rode two lemons, clad in suits of yellow satin, military cocked hats, and scarlet leather belts, from which dangled rapiers, their hilts sparkling with jewels; and after them came twenty pears, mounted, and also armed; five immense carts,

drawn by stout brown rats, and containing the baggage of the party; and, last of all, ten mounted red bananas, armed with bows and arrows. The entire retinue, on the march, presented a most brilliant and formidable appearance, and when, after a journey of two weeks, the apple and his suite arrived at the gates of Nuttemberg, the inhabitants of the place turned out en masse to view them pass through the street.

The apple had despatched a courier to announce his approach to the king, and his majesty ordered the mayor and board of aldermen, besides several grandees of the kingdom, to conduct him to the palace, where, at the gates, he himself, attended by his son, the Prince of Baracoa, and his nephew, Prince Dagobert, met and welcomed him.

The three days following were wholly given up to pleasure. Fête after fête succeeded each other in an unceasing round of gayety. Every honor and attention in the king's power was lavished on the delighted apple, who, a true courtier, deemed himself the most blessed of men, because he enjoyed the flattering regard of a monarch. Inspired with a pleasing sense of his own importance, he commenced negotiations with alacrity, and he had not been at the Nuttish court more than a month ere the announcement reached Fruitania that King Francis had accepted the offer of George IV., and his son had relinquished all claim to the hand of the princess.

This welcome intelligence was received by the

Fruits with transports of joy, and by the princess with a flood of grateful tears. Naturally of a timid disposition, Stephanie had feared the earl's mission would not result in success; and the knowledge that her apprehensions were groundless, filled her heart with happiness too great for words.

The king, on the contrary, could not find language of sufficient eloquence to express his joy. Already his brain was busy with schemes for his daughter's future. She should now certainly be married to Prince Henry of Klyngstone, as had once been intended. He would immediately despatch the Duke of Aprikott to Klyngstone, and endeavor to place matters on their original basis. He imparted his plans to the princess. She received them with a start of terror, and a sudden paling of countenance.

"My dearest child," exclaimed the king, "what is the matter with you? Surely, you can have no objection to renewing your engagement to your cousin!"

"Alas, my father," replied Stephanie, "the thought of marrying an unknown person fills my soul with horror! What if my cousin should prove to be such a monster as the Prince of Baracoa?"

"But he will not," answered the king, smiling; "for Sir Baldwin Apple, who has seen him, informs me he is a remarkably handsome young fruit."

"Oh, I know I am weak," said the poor little princess, endeavoring to repress her tears; "but I cannot overcome my folly. I do not wish to be married to any

one," she added, throwing herself into her father's arms. "I cannot endure the idea of another lover, now that I have escaped the prince."

The king tenderly kissed her and gazed long and earnestly upon her face. For the first time he observed that the princess was greatly changed. Her cheeks had lost their rosy roundness, and her lips their accustomed smile. Dark rings encircled the deep blue eyes, and told of sleepless nights and frequent tears. A faint idea of what Stephanie had suffered since her betrothal to the cocoanut flashed through the old peach's mind, and he realized she was in no fit condition to form a decision regarding her future.

"Well, well," he said, tenderly smoothing back her golden hair, "we will not argue the matter now. Let it lie awhile. But, my dear child, you are absolutely growing pale! This court-life is wearing you to death. What do you say to a few months' sojourn at Blossom Castle, where you can quietly recuperate both mind and body?"

The princess smiled faintly. She saw but too plainly that the real object her father had in view was to allow her time to reflect upon what he had said; but she passively replied that she thought she should like to go to the castle very much.

Accordingly preparations for her departure were at once commenced, and the next day found her, accompanied by a few favorite attendants, on her journey. Upon arriving at the castle she found that her father had anticipated every wish, —for he had caused to be transported there books, pictures, musical instruments; in short, everything which could possibly

amuse and interest her. Stephanie felt grateful for this, and endeavored to fix her mind upon what had once been her favorite pursuits; but all in vain. The music she played was no music, but discord; her brush and pencil refused the guidance of her unsteady fingers, and her mind strayed from the subject of her books, to lose itself in vain imaginings regarding her future and the Prince of Klyngstone.

There was a little grove at the back of the castle, separated from the other grounds by a high stone wall. Here Stephanie caused to be constructed a little bower, and here she would pass the greater portion of her time in solitude, which not even her favorites — the ladies Ethelreda Apple and Messina Lemmonne — were allowed to interrupt. Very wearily passed her life at Blossom Castle!

One evening she stole alone to her sylvan retreat. In her hand she held a letter just received from the king, and which she had not as yet opened. She did not enter the bower, but seated herself by the edge of a little fountain, which stood in the centre of the grove.

She fancied the drip, drip, of the water from a goblet, which a marble nymph held ever aloft towards a nectarine, who, with casque in hand, leaned from his rearing rabbit to drink, acted soothingly upon her spirit. The moon was high in the heavens, and shed around a dazzling brilliancy. By its light she broke the seal and read her father's missive. It ran thus:—

I am plunged, my darling child, in the depths of despair! The Duke of Aprikott has visited your cousin, and laid before him my proposal to renew the old engagement. Prince Henry replies that he

refuses to accept the offer!—that the insult he received, in being cast aside for the Prince of Baracoa, is too deep a one ever to be forgiven by him. Adieu, my child, and weep for your sorrowful father.

The paper fell from Stephanie's hand. Her first sensation was one of such intense joy that a little, glad cry escaped her lips. From a thicket near by a faint, mocking laugh seemed to echo it. The princess sprang to her feet, and a cold thrill of horror seemed to freeze her very blood, as suddenly the tall figure of a man emerged from behind a neighboring tree. She gave but one glance at it, and stood perfectly still, as if rooted to the ground. It was the figure of the Prince of Baracoa.

Stephanie could not fly. There was but one gate in the garden-wall, and the cocoanut stood directly in the pathway leading to it; so she remained silent while Ferdinand slowly approached her. When he arrived at a point opposite her he came to a stand-still, and stood gazing with admiring eyes at her pallid countenance. The high blood of her royal ancestors rose to the princess' cheek. Summoning a degree of firmness of which she had never dreamed herself capable, she demanded haughtily what he wished. This question seemed to nonplus the prince for a moment, and then he replied:—

“You, to be sure! What do you suppose? I've been watching a whole month for an opportunity to secure you; and now I have it I mean to take advantage of it. I have you now, my darling, and you shall yet be the Princess of Baracoa!”

“Sir!” cried Stephanie, “what do you mean? You are in possession of the Island of Shamrock, and have relinquished

all claim to my hand; therefore, as a nut of honor, you will cease to trouble me. Nay, stand off!" she added, her eyes emitting such an indignant flash as the stars might dart towards some dark cloud that endeavored to quench their sparkling beauty.

"Oh, I won't hurt you," said the prince, with a chuckling laugh, catching her in his arms and imprinting several kisses on her lips; "and it is of no use for you to attempt to run away, for I have a dozen nuts ready to arrest your progress. If you scream," he added, again chuckling, "I shall know how to stop your mouth."

Poor Stephanie made a desperate struggle to free herself from the vice-like grasp of the cocoanut; but in vain. His hard, brown hand was pressed heavily upon her lips, and, utterly incapable of motion, she felt herself hurried along to the farthest extremity of the garden. There a rope ladder was affixed to the wall, and up this the prince sprang, carefully bearing his light burden. By the same ladder he descended to the ground on the other side of the wall. Here ten or a dozen nuts, all armed and mounted, were grouped around a close black carriage. Into this vehicle the prince jumped, with Stephanie still in his arms. The door was closed and locked, a signal given, and the whole party started off at a rapid pace, yet as noiselessly as though their animals' feet had been shod with velvet.

Oh, that weary drive through the long, silent night, with her head resting on the snuff-colored arm of the prince, and her dainty fingers clasped in his rough, brown hand! Poor, little princess! At dawn the carriage suddenly came to a



The Prince of Baracoa abducting the Princess Stephanie.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

B

6

stand-still, the door was unlocked, and the prince, still holding his precious burden, alighted.

By the dim, uncertain light of the early morning, Stephanie perceived that they were in a sort of ravine, or little valley, perhaps half a mile long, and walled in on every side by precipitous cliffs, clothed to their summits with tall and stately trees. But this wild spot was not uninhabited. Right before her stood a little hut, its walls and roof thatched and plastered with mud. A light glimmered at its solitary window, and in the open door-way stood the tall and angular figure of a pine cone, dressed in a gown of some dark stuff, and wearing an immense frilled cap.

Not a word did she speak, but moved aside as the prince walked slowly past her into the house, — if house it might be called, — and entered a large room, which seemingly occupied nearly the whole of the ground floor. It was scantily furnished, everything being of the rudest fashion, the floor bare, and the walls unfinished.

Baracoa, without a word, placed the princess on a wooden settle, which occupied one corner of the room, and then, silently turning, left the hut. A moment later the clatter of claws and rumble of wheels, announced that he and his friends had taken their departure.

And now the princess, gazing around, perceived that, besides the old woman, there were in the room two other cones. They were of wild and rough appearance, and from their seat in the chimney nook, where they were smoking their pipes and noisily disputing over a game of dice, they often cast furtive and inquiring glances at her.

Stephanie turned from them with a feeling of sickening disgust, towards the old woman, who was now busily engaged in preparing breakfast. Her ancient and wrinkled visage did not give promise of a very gentle nature; but Stephanie was not deterred by this. She rose and, approaching her, asked gently if she would not tell her where she was, and for what purpose she had been brought there.

The old woman smiled, but not unkindly, and replied that she had no cause to be alarmed; no one would molest her; and this was all the answer that could be obtained from her, though the princess resorted to entreaties, and even to prayers and tears.

The long day wore wearily by. The old woman placed food before the princess, and Stephanie forced herself to swallow a few morsels. When evening came the candles were lighted, and the old woman sat down to knit; but it was evident that some one was expected, for frequently she would pause in her work, and, rising, open the door and listen. At such periods Stephanie's heart sank. She felt sure it was the prince whose coming the woman looked for, and her nervous excitement increased with every hour.

But Baracoa did not come, and at last the woman seemed to give up all idea of his reappearance. She laid her work away, fastened the shutters more securely, and then, opening a door at the farther end of the room, conducted the princess to a little chamber at the back of the house. As soon as Stephanie entered, the woman retired, and the princess was left alone, a prey to the most distressing thoughts.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

v



*Stephanie in the hut with the
the old woman Cone.*

But weary nature will assert her rights, and, almost unconsciously, Stephanie at last dropped into a troubled slumber. Yet even in her dreams she heard the rattle of the dice in the other room, and the muttered exclamations of the cones as the game progressed.

III.

The intense terror which had taken possession of Stephanie's heart when she found herself alone with the two fierce-looking cones, and the old cone their mother, gradually subsided as day by day wore on, and she became accustomed to their presence. The men were rough enough in their manner, and the woman was certainly not more amiable; but they all maintained great respect toward the princess; and, after their fashion, really seemed to feel a sort of sympathy for her.

This, however, did not prevent them from keeping a strict watch upon her movements. She was closely confined to the house, being generally secluded during the day in the little, cell-like chamber. Here she passed many solitary hours,—hours which seemed to be centuries in length; hours which all her life were never forgotten. The suspense she endured regarding her ultimate fate strained her nerves to a degree that was agony, and this was greatly increased by the non-appearance of the Prince of Baracoa. If he would but come she should perhaps learn

definitely what were his intentions. She almost felt as if his arrival would be welcome, yet she uttered a cry of unmistakable dismay when one morning the old woman informed her the prince would probably visit them that day. She controlled her quivering lip, however, sufficiently to inquire at what hour he might be expected. The cone replied that she supposed he would arrive some time during the evening.

This information did not tend to reassure Stephanie, for she instantly felt certain that Ferdinand's purpose was to remove her from the hut of the cones to some other place. She could not explain why she thought this, but, as hour after hour dragged slowly by, the conviction became more thoroughly impressed on her mind. A sort of grim despair took possession of her soul, crushing out every spark of hope; yet not even to herself did she utter a complaint; but she was resolved that nothing — torture, or even the prospect of death — should induce her to consent to become the wife of Baracoa.

Evening came at last. Stephanie could keep no note of time, but she judged it must have been about ten o'clock, when the tramp, tramp, of rabbits was heard approaching through the valley; and in a few moments the door was thrown open, and Prince Ferdinand entered the house. Never had he appeared such a monster of ugliness! His fierce, dark eyes burned like coals of fire, and his sardonic smile expressed a cruel and unflinching determination. He spoke a few rapid words to the woman, who immediately arose and left the room, returning, an instant later,

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

B

6



*The Prince of Baracoa flying off with the
Princess Stephanie.*

with a cloak of some dark material, in which she proceeded to envelop the princess. Baracoa then led the way to the door.

Several Nuts, well armed and mounted on fleet-footed animals, were grouped together in the open space before the hut, where one of the cones held the bridle of two beautiful snow-white rabbits. Taking the princess in his arms the cocoanut placed her upon one of these, and then with a bound sprang to the saddle of the other. At a signal half-a-dozen cream Nuts surrounded the princess, and the remainder of the Nuts formed two separate detachments, one of which, headed by the prince, took the lead of the party, while the other brought up the rear. A second signal was given, and the animals started off at a canter.

The moon, half hidden by banks of sable clouds, emitted a faint and uncertain light; but by its beams Stephanie could see that the region which they traversed was desolate in the extreme. The path led through the mountains, and every step plunged them deeper and deeper into the wild and uninhabited country. The journey was continued in perfect silence, save when an impatient rider muttered some angry exclamation regarding his rabbit, or the prince, wrapped in his own thoughts, gave vent to a derisive sneer or chuckling laugh.

To Stephanie this at length became almost unendurable. The stillness, instead of quieting, only served to irritate her spirit, and she found herself straining every nerve to catch the faintest whisper that floated on the air. Soon her sense of hearing seemed to become increased a hundred-fold.

Not a leaf rustled, not a pebble fell from the hillside, but her tortured ear perceived it. Consequently it was she who first detected a slight and almost imperceptible sound far in the distance before them. The princess' heart bounded with joy! There was no mistaking the heavy tramp of rabbits, coming nearer and nearer every moment!

But the Nuts had by this time also noticed the sound. As rapidly as possible their rodents were turned aside into a thicket which skirted the roadside, and the whole party waited in silence for the riders, whoever they might be, to appear. Prince Ferdinand had ridden up to Stephanie's side, and now sat holding her hands tightly in one of his, while the other was pressed firmly over her lips.

Nearer now and nearer approached the rabbit riders. They turned the corner of a steep crag, and came slowly into view, — a black, moving mass, shapeless and indistinct. Suddenly the moon, hitherto so chary of exhibiting her countenance, emerged from the dark clouds, and poured a flood of radiance around, disclosing to the eyes of the astonished Nuts, a band of fifteen or twenty Fruits, and every one armed with pistols and rapiers.

The thrill of joy that passed through the heart of the princess almost deprived her of the power to think, but only for a moment. The next instant she raised her foot, and, with all the force of which she was capable, struck the heel of her little boot into the rabbit's side.

Maddened with the pain and fright of this unexpected blow, the animal bounded high in the air, and so sudden and impetuous was the leap, that the prince's hand was torn

from Stephanie's mouth. Taking advantage of this, the princess uttered a loud and piercing shriek, and dashed her rabbit out into the open road.

The effect of her appearance was electrical. While one of the Fruits rushed forward and seized the bridle of her rearing rodent, his companions plunged their animals into the thicket, when they were instantly charged upon by the Nuts, and a hand-to-hand battle commenced. The two contending parties were about equally matched in number and skill, and for some time it seemed as if Fortune favored them alike; but at length it became evident that the Fruits must eventually be the victorious party. The Prince of Baracoa was the first to perceive this, and he determined to flee rather than surrender to his conquerors. Accordingly he managed, after a desperate struggle, to fight his way into the road, where, giving a wild halloo, he started off at a headlong pace. His men were not slow to follow his example, and fled in every direction.

The pineapple, who had seized Stephanie's rabbit when he rushed from the thicket, had led him a little distance up the road, to a sheltered position behind a large boulder, where, after securing him, he assisted the princess to dismount. Leaning against the rock she watched with fascinated eyes the dreadful combat, while her heart was almost bursting with terror. To her it seemed a fearful carnage. She could not distinguish what party was in the ascendant, and it was not until she had seen the last Nut disappear down the mountain, that she realized her countrymen were the victors of the day.

The pineapple, sword in hand, remained at her side during the battle. He now advanced to the Fruits, and spoke a few hurried words to one of them. This person, who appeared to be their leader, immediately dismounted from his rabbit, and followed the pineapple towards Stephanie.

As he approached, the princess perceived he was a peach, apparently not more than twenty-two or three years of age. A deadly pallor, caused by loss of blood from a wound in the arm, was spread over his face; but this did not detract from the beauty of his features. The eyes were a deep, dark blue, the nose finely cut, and the forehead white and lofty. The mouth was small, and shaded by a long, light mustache, which terminated at the ends in a well-defined point, as did also the short, silky beard. Altogether he was a person that, once seen, would not be easily forgotten. There was that in his dignified bearing, and calm, earnest eyes, which impressed Stephanie with an instant and absolute trust in him, and the low, harmonious tones of his voice deepened this feeling.

"Fair lady," he said, removing his plumed hat, and bowing low, "now that my followers have put to flight those Nuts, from whom you seemingly desired to escape, tell me what further can be done to assist you."

"Noble sir," replied the princess, "there is but one thing that I desire, and that is to be restored to my father."

"That may be easily done," said the peach, "if you will but tell me where to seek him. Lives he in this country, or is his home in Fruitania?"

Stephanie and the young Peach.



THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

L

"Alas," exclaimed Stephanie, "I know not if he lives at all! I fear me grief has caused his death."

"If that be so," said the peach, "I will seek your other friends."

"Noble sir," replied the princess, "it is not meet that you, to whom I owe my escape from the hands of my captors, should be longer addressed in enigmas. Know, then, that you see before you the unhappy Stephanie of Fruitania!"

The peach started back, and involuntarily pressed his hand upon his heart.

"Stephanie of Fruitania!" he echoed, but in a tone which excessive surprise rendered mechanical.

"Yes, noble sir," continued the princess, "it is indeed she who addresses you —"

But the peach interrupted her vehemently:—

"How came you hither? Who were those who held you in bondage?"

In a few simple words Stephanie related her story. The grief and indignation of the peach knew no bounds.

"Villain!" he muttered between his clenched teeth. "He shall pay dearly for this!"

"But it is not meet," he continued, a moment later, "that the Princess Royal of Fruitania should remain longer in this secluded region. Louis," turning to the pineapple, who had withdrawn to a short distance during the conversation, "desire our companions to form in order as soon as possible! We must return to Fruitania."

The excitement of the Fruits, upon learning that the lady whom they had rescued from the hands of the Nuts,

was no less a person than the daughter of their king, cannot be described. The line of march was quickly formed, and the whole party put in motion. At its head rode the young peach, and by his side was the princess, pale, but in some degree restored to composure. The peach refrained from referring to the Prince of Baracoa, and endeavored by every means to prevent her mind from dwelling upon her sufferings.

He was, the princess learned, a gentleman of the province of Stemmes, who, with a few companions, was travelling through Nuttanny for scientific purposes. He had been living among the mountains for some little time, in order to collect specimens of the different strata of rock and earth of which they were composed. His conversation charmed the princess, and his delicate thoughtfulness touched her heart.

They did not return along the same road which led through the ravine where stood the hut of the cones, but by another one, that soon brought them out of the mountainous regions into a level plain. The peach informed Stephanie that they were now in Kernelshell, a border province of Nuttanny, and that a ride of a few hours would probably bring them to Blosson's Castle.

The morning light was just breaking as the confines of the Nuttish dominions were passed, and the rabbits set their feet on Fruitish soil. Exclamations of rapture burst from the excited Fruits, who now used every effort to urge their fatigued and foaming animals onward; but the sun was high in the heavens ere they came in sight of the road that led to the castle.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R C



The Purple-plum rushing down the palace steps to welcome Stephanie.

Not a person appeared as they rode rapidly down the avenue. The massive gates stood wide open, as did also the heavy entrance doors, and they galloped unchallenged into the court. The peach dismounted and assisted the princess to alight; then, respectfully offering his hand, he led her up the steps, and they entered the broad and lofty hall.

But as they crossed the threshold, a piercing scream rent the air.

"The princess! The princess!" exclaimed a voice, and the purple plum rushed wildly down a staircase, and, throwing himself at Stephanie's feet, seized her hand and covered it with kisses.

In an instant the whole castle became a scene of the wildest confusion. From every apartment of the building Fruits rushed into the hall. There was Lady Messina Lemmonne, and Lady Ethelreda Apple, besides all the other maids-of-honor; the Duke of Valencia, Sir Harold Banana, Count Bartlett Paire, the Viscount of Oxheart, the huckleberry, the strawberry, and many others. It seemed as if every noble in the kingdom was assembled at the castle, and they laughed, cried, and shrieked with the very excess of their rapture. Last of all appeared the king, pale as death, and trembling in every limb. One brief second and father and child were clasped in each other's arms!

What pen can portray that meeting? What words are sufficiently eloquent to describe the deep, fervent joy that filled their hearts to overflowing?

As soon as her father was sufficiently composed to listen, Stephanie related the history of her abduction by the Prince Baracoa. Frequently during the recital she was interrupted by the enraged Fruits, who, with one accord, vowed that dire vengeance should be visited on the head of the villanous cocoanut.

"We were assembled here," said a large and stately-looking nutmeg melon, "to decide upon the best course to be pursued in seeking the princess. Since she is found, methinks we had best turn our attention to forming a plan for punishing this audacious prince!"

"Let us go! Let us go!" cried a pear. "Where are the archers, the foot men, the rabbit men? Let them away to Nuttanny!"

"Bring me my sword!" yelled the red banana. "With that trusty blade I could slay twice twenty cocoanuts!"

"Away! Away!" roared the purple plum, seizing the strawberry by the hand and dragging him to the door, "let us be revenged upon Baracoa!"

"Calm yourselves, my dear subjects!" exclaimed the king, earnestly; "calm yourselves, I entreat! This is a matter which must be discussed when you are more cool."

These words served in some degree to quiet the agitated Fruits.

"But 'twas a marvellous escape," the king continued, as he pressed his daughter once more to his heart. "And I can never," he added, turning to the young peach,—"I can never sufficiently express the gratitude which I feel toward you and your noble companions for the rescue of my child.

Ask what you will, even though it be to the half of my kingdom, and the request shall be granted."

"Sire," said the young fruit, while a faint smile played around his mouth, "what I desire most in this world can be only given to me by one person. Her Royal Highness alone has the power to confer it upon me!"

"I will answer for my daughter," replied the king, "that the gift is granted already. Speak, what is it?"

"Since you bid me tell you," said the peach, "I must needs obey the command. Know, then, sire, the boon I crave is the heart of the Princess Stephanie!"

If a thunderbolt had suddenly fallen among the Fruits, it could not have created more consternation than did these words. The eyes of the king flashed with a dangerous fire.

"What!" he exclaimed, laying his hand on the hilt of his rapier, "you ask for the heart of the Princess Royal of Fruitania! Audacious wretch! Who are you that thus dares to aspire to such a height?"

"Your disobedient and undutiful nephew, Henry of Klyngstone!" replied the peach, and threw himself at the feet of the king.

"What!" cried the king, — "you my nephew?"

"Even so," said the peach; "I am that foolish and headstrong fruit, who, in a fit of jealous pride, threw away the hand of the sweetest being that lives."

"It is, indeed, the prince, Your Majesty," said Sir Baldwin Apple, stepping forward; and a wild cheer went up from the lips of the other Fruits.

"The prince! the prince!" exclaimed the red banana, rushing wildly up and down the hall. "He is come! He is come!"

"Ha, ha!" cried a gooseberry; "Ferdinand, of Baracoa, will be doubly outwitted!"

"Long live Prince Harry, of Klyngstone!" screamed the huckleberry, in black silk stockings and pumps, as, in the excess of his joy, he climbed upon a neighboring table and shook hands with a gigantic watermelon. "Long live Frederick Henry Auguste!"

The cry was taken up by all the Fruits, and echoed through every portion of the castle. Meanwhile the confused and agitated princess, accompanied by her ladies, escaped from the hall.

How long the excited courtiers would have continued to cheer the prince, none can tell, but they were suddenly interrupted by a groom in waiting, who entered, bearing a letter, which he presented to the king. It had, he said, been handed him, a moment since, by a filbert, who, upon delivering it, had ridden away from the castle as fast as his mouse could carry him. King George broke the seal and glanced at the contents. A deadly pallor overspread his face. Turning to Sir Harold Banana, who stood beside him, he placed it in his hand, saying faintly, "Read it!" Sir Harold immediately read aloud as follows:—

To His Majesty the King of Fruitania:—

SIRE,—Long before this missive reaches you I shall have passed the boundaries of Nuttanny, and entered the kingdom of the Grasses; but I cannot bid farewell to Fruitania forever, without seeking to

repair, as far as it lies in my power, the great wrong which I have aided in committing against you and the unhappy Princess Stephanie.

She has disappeared, and I need hardly tell you that the Prince of Baracoa is the cause of her disappearance. But she lives, sire, and may yet be saved! Prince Ferdinand, upon accomplishing the abduction of her Royal Highness from Blossom Castle, carried her to a lonely hut in the Kernelshell Mountain, intending to leave her there to rest a few hours, and then remove her to his Castle of Baracoa. Intelligence of the sudden illness of his father reaching him, however, he immediately repaired to Nuttemberg, where he has been obliged to remain for several days; but he purposes, as soon as possible, to carry her to the castle, where she will be instantly placed in a dungeon, and subjected to fearful torture, should she not consent to become his bride.

And now, sire, listen to the confession of the heart-broken wretch who now addresses you. When I left Fruitania as your ambassador to the Court of Nuttanny, I really had your cause at heart, and intended to work faithfully for you; but the love of gold was more powerful than the sense of duty. It was I, sire, who aided the Prince of Baracoa in scheming to revenge himself upon you for withholding from him the hand of the princess; I who, informed of her every movement by my unsuspecting daughter, first conceived the idea of stealing her from Fruitania.

I dare not ask you to forgive, sire, the wretched

APPLE OF SPITZBERGEN.

A deathlike stillness fell upon the Fruits. At length a deep sigh from the king broke the silence.

“So it is ever,” he said, passing his hand across his brow. “Those whom we most trust, are the ones who first play the traitor.” Then, turning to his nephew, he added, “What would have been the fate of my sweet

Stephanie, had it not been for the noble interposition of you and your brave followers, I do not dare to think. May Fortune favor you in obtaining the heart which you desire!"

"Huzza!" exclaimed the Fruits in unison, as Prince Henry seized his uncle's hand and pressed it to his lips.

The news of the princess' return to Fruitania flew like wildfire over the kingdom. Two weeks later, the official announcement of her betrothal to her cousin, the Prince of Klyngstone, filled the whole country with delight. A grand fête, lasting three days, was celebrated at the Palace of Peachingbloom, in honor of this event, when the king took occasion to bestow the diamond star of the Legion of Honor upon those Fruits who had assisted in rescuing Her Royal Highness from the hands of the Nuts. It hardly need be said that he had already presented them with more substantial proofs of his gratitude.

The rage and consternation of the Prince of Baracoa, upon learning that all hopes of ever securing the hand of the princess were now at an end, knew no bounds, and he declared he would kill Prince Henry, if he lost his own life in the attempt. Accordingly, arming himself with a large dirk, he set out for Fruitania; but near Blossom Castle he was thrown by his rabbit headlong against a tree, and dashed into a thousand pieces. His remains were found a few hours later by two lemons, and were by the king's order at once forwarded to Nuttany.



*The two lemons discovering the remains
of the Prince of Baracoa.*

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

B

6

From the shock occasioned by his son's untimely death, the old king of the Nuts never recovered. He died within a few months, and the reins of the Nuttish government passed into the hands of his nephew, Prince Dagobert, a judicious and noble-hearted young Nut, who ruled his country wisely, and dwelt in peace with the neighboring kingdoms.

"In fact," said the Duke of Valencia, when conversing with some of the Fruits upon the strange and thrilling events which had so recently occurred, "I do not see but that, after all, everything has happened for the best. If Baracoa had not stolen the princess, perhaps she and the Prince of Klyngstone would never have met and fallen in love."

"True, quite true," exclaimed the strawberry; "nor should we have ever learned the real character of the Earl of Spitzbergen, who is, to use the words of my ancestor, the poet, —

False in thoughts, in words, in deeds,
False from stem to core!"

"The fate of Prince Ferdinand was, after all, rather a sad one!" said the red banana.

"It should be a lesson to other villains!" answered the purple plum.

"Well, well," said the huckleberry, "everybody is happy now!"

"Ah, with our princess restored to us, who can complain?" said Malayga Graype, and all the Fruits replied: —

"Long live the Princess Stephanie!"

III

WHITEGAUNTLET

WHITEGAUNTLET.



I.

It was toward the close of a cold and dreary afternoon in the month of November, that a young almond, mounted on a large and powerful-looking gray mouse, might have been observed slowly riding along one of those narrow and secluded defiles which abound in the wild mountain regions of northern Nuttany.

Both the mouse and his rider presented a most picturesque appearance. The tall and slender figure of the almond was cased in a closely plated suit of steel armor, and his head was surmounted by a crested helmet, over which was partially drawn a hood and collar of mail. A steel cuirass covered his breast, and gloves and long-pointed shoes, of the same material, protected his hands and feet; while a triangular shield suspended around his neck bore on it his coat-of-arms,—a white gauntlet, borne by two mice rampant, and, in ancient Nuttish text, the legend "I hope." His lance, decorated with a scarlet pennoncel, was secured to his saddle, as was also a heavy, steel, axe-like instrument called a mace-at-arms; but beside these weapons he was provided with a broad, double-edged falchion, and a short, jewel-hilted poniard, known in knightly language as the dagger of mercy.

The accoutrements of the mouse were nearly as cumbersome as those of the warrior himself. They consisted of defensive armor, which covered the most exposed portions of his body, and a head-piece of steel, having apertures for the nostrils and eyes, and, on that part which protected the forehead, a short, sharply pointed piece of steel, which projected forward somewhat like a pike. The reins were of steel chain-work, and the saddle, heavily plated with metal, was covered by a scarlet cloth, fringed with silver and decorated, like the shield, with the emblems of the knight.

The way along which lay the traveller's route was one apparently but seldom frequented by man or beast. Hardly wider than a footpath, it wound over fragments of rough and jagged rock, where scarce a foothold was to be obtained; now skirting the edge of some vast precipice, where a single false step on the part of the mouse would have dashed his rider headlong into the black yawning gulf below; anon between deep, rocky chasms, down which the mountain streams, swollen into torrents by the recent rains, rushed tumbling and foaming, like angry spirits.

On every side, far as the eye could reach, huge peaks, crowned with eternal snows, towered upward to the sky, shutting in the narrow pass as with a wall of living rock. No sign of habitation appeared among those barren hills. All was wildly, majestically desolate.

One would have thought that his situation in this sequestered region, with the shadows of evening fast gathering over the earth, would have excited, at least, a feeling of anxiety in the breast of the traveller. But apparently no

fears of any kind disturbed the even current of his mind. From time to time, as he rode along, snatches of song would escape his lips, and at length, in a clear, rich voice, he burst into one of those ballads, which in ancient times, when minstrelsy was at its height, were the popular fashion of the day. The words, which were in the soft language of Vegetabilia, seemed to run nearly thus: —

Oh, a gallant young knight was Sir Roderick Beete
There never was man whom he dreaded to meet.
In many a joust, at the point of his steel,
He had won the bright spurs that he wore at his heel.
His enemies trembled whenever was seen
His mighty brown hare, and his plume of dark green.
The first one to strike, and the last to retreat,
Oh, a gallant young knight was Sir Roderick Beete!

Oh, a gallant young knight was Sir Roderick Beete!
He scarce knew the meaning of fear and defeat.
His lance never shattered, his sword never broke,
His arm never faltered in dealing a stroke.
The bravest of warriors had battled in vain
To number his name in the list of the slain.
“There never *was* one whom I trembled to meet,
And there never will be!” said Sir Roderick Beete.

Alas for the boast of Sir Roderick Beete!
He saw a young maiden, so pretty and sweet,
And the knight who so fearlessly wielded the lance
Surrendered at once 'neath the power of a glance.
His valor forsook him, and when she was nigh
He did nothing but tremble, and stammer, and sigh;
And every one laughed at the conquest complete,
Of that gallant young warrior, Sir Roderick Beete!

The last strains of the roundelay sank lingeringly to rest among the hills. An instant later the clear, mellow notes of a mountain-horn echoed through the valley, and the knight, quickly turning in his saddle, beheld, on the side of a steep crag at his left, the figure of a mouse, whose rider was urging him onward with whip and spur at an almost headlong pace. Down he rushed, seeming to fly along the dizzy road, leaping chasm after chasm with feet that scarcely touched the ground, until, with one last bound, he cleared the mouth of a vast precipice, and paused, trembling and foaming, directly in our traveller's pathway.

The new-comers formed a group in singular accordance with the wild scene around them. The background of gray rock, and grayer sky, brought into sharp relief the outlines of their figures, and the rays of the setting sun, throwing over all a flickering red light, imparted to both a weird and supernatural appearance. This effect was greatly heightened by the costume of the mouse-man. Over a hunting-shirt of some coarse, dark cloth was carelessly wrapped a mantle of bright green and red plaid, one corner of it thrown back across his shoulder, displaying a belt of white mouse-skin, richly embroidered with many colored silks, through which was thrust a dirk or short dagger,—the usual weapon of the peasants of the highland regions. Two broad green ribbons crossed his breast in opposite directions, and to one of these was suspended the horn on which he had blown the ringing blast; while the other served to secure a bow and half-empty quiver of arrows. His shoes, of



Sir Aylmer Almonde meeting the Highland chief.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

tanned mouse-skin, were laced with red strings, and reached so high as nearly to touch the hem of his plaited skirt; and a little bonnet of white fur, ornamented with a single feather, sat jauntily on his head. That he was a sportsman, his costume, and the presence of a dead locust's body slung across his mouse's back, seemed to give evident proof. He addressed our traveller instantly.

"Good-morrow, Sir Knight," said he, in a voice that seemed a strange mixture of soft and discordant tones; "you seem to be in a merry mood this even!"

"In good sooth I am," replied the knight, "as you should also be, who have killed so fine an insect."

The huntsman smiled. "Here you speak the truth," he answered. "I have, indeed, good cause to be joyous. This beast I have here, will fetch me such a price as was never paid for locust before."

"How is that?" inquired the knight. "He does not seem to be as large a fellow as I have seen."

"No, not so large," replied the huntsman; "but you see he is a beast of reputation. He was, when alive, the most cunning creature that ever scoured the Nuttish hills. For months he has evaded pursuit, for the united exertions of every hunter in the district were not sufficient to outwit him. Ah, many a wild chase has he led the noble lords and dames through this very valley! Sometimes he would fall, and then up would go a loud halloo, and, thinking he was done with, on we would rush, when, lo! — there he was off again, and as far from being caught as ever. But I have brought him down

at last, and right glad am I, for the Baron Launcelot Chestnutte has promised three hundred seeds to him who should slay the beast, and I am journeying to the Barony now to receive the prize."

"To the Barony of Chestnutte Burr!" exclaimed the knight, his face suddenly lighting. "Well met, good huntsman! I, too, am bound to that same destination; and," he added courteously, "if you do not object, I will travel there in your company."

"To that arrangement," rejoined the huntsman, "I agree with a good will. Do you know the road well?"

"Not at all," answered the knight, "for, although, as you see, a native of this country, it is an unknown land to me. My home is in Vegetableria."

"If that is the case," said the hunter, "it is well that I met you; for this glen has such a tangle of roads and by-paths that one not acquainted here may readily lose his way. Keep by me, however, and I will bring you safely to your destination." So saying, he gathered up his mouse's reins, and giving the animal a sharp cut with the rowels, started off again at full speed, closely followed by the almond.

The evening shadows thickened quickly, and the dim twilight was succeeded by the early darkness, yet still the huntsman rode on. He seemed familiar with every step of the way, and guided his steed with a hand that never faltered. At intervals the deep roar of a brook would sound, seemingly just beneath their feet; then would the huntsman turn and seize the bridle of his

companion; there would follow a flying leap, and on they would rush faster than before. Thus the journey continued for the space of two hours or so, when suddenly the huntsman brought both animals to a standstill.

"Look!" said he, slowly, "the moon is just rising over yonder ancient pile. We have reached our destination!"

The almond turned in the direction indicated by his companion's hand, and beheld, a few rods before him, the spires and turrets of a castle looming up dark and majestic, and the tall trees of a spacious park. It was a noble-looking edifice; yet there was about it an indescribable something which impressed the knight with a vague, uneasy feeling, as unaccountable as it was sudden. The moonlight, falling on the old gray walls, turned them to a ghostly whiteness, and suggested the idea of an abode of spirits. This was increased by the absence of anything like life around the building. Not a light glimmered at the windows, save in a solitary watch-tower, where one faint flame burned a ghastly blue; not a footstep or a voice sounded on the air.

The huntsman seemed not to remark any of these peculiarities, and, riding rapidly up to the massive gate of the castle, sounded a long and musical blast upon his horn. In an instant, and as if by magic, all was changed. Steps were heard hurriedly pacing to and fro, lights appeared in quick succession, voices called to each other, bolts grated harshly, as they slid backwards, and chains clanked heavily to the ground; the great gate swung

slowly open, and the two travellers rode into the court of the castle.

Sir Aymer Almonde, Knight of the Whitegauntlet, was as brave a warrior as ever wielded lance, yet he half drew his falchion as if in self-defence when his eyes rested on the interior of that castle court. Drawn up in a line on either side of the paved path that led to the main door of the building was a body of fifty Nuts, and, what amazed the almond more, all arrayed in the singular costume of his huntsman friend. They stood as silent as statues, each with his bow-string bent, as if in readiness to discharge an arrow, and only awaiting the signal.

"Well, Sir Aymer Almonde," said a deep voice behind him, "what think you of our castle troop?"

The knight started and turned quickly. The highland huntsman was standing beside him, a disdainful smile curling his thin, heavily bearded lip. A thousand wild suspicions flashed across the almond's mind.

"Where is Sir Launcelot Chestnutte?" he demanded.

"At Chestnutte Burr Barony, I presume," answered the huntsman, shrugging his shoulders.

"False villain! What is this place thou hast brought me to?" cried the knight, his dark eyes kindling with a dangerous fire.

"That," replied the other, carelessly, "is a question time may solve."

The almond turned on him like a tiger.

"Traitor!" he exclaimed, raising from the saddle of his mouse the ponderous steel battle-axe, which was secured

there; "you shall rue these words!"—but the elevated weapon never descended on the head of the highland huntsman, for a heavy hand suddenly arrested its downward course, and Aymer of Almonde was thrown senseless and bleeding on the stone-paved floor of the court.

II.

When the Knight of the Whitegauntlet again opened his eyes, it was to gaze blankly about him in utter bewilderment. He found himself in a long, low chamber, not exactly a dungeon, yet evidently designed for a place of imprisonment, for the one narrow window which lighted it was defended within and without by a double row of strong iron bars.

The walls and floor were of solid stone, heavily carved in some places, and around three sides of the room ran a stone bench, having affixed to it at intervals massive iron chains, which once might have served to secure the unhappy prisoners whose fate doomed them to this gloomy abode, but were now, from long disuse, covered with dust and mould.

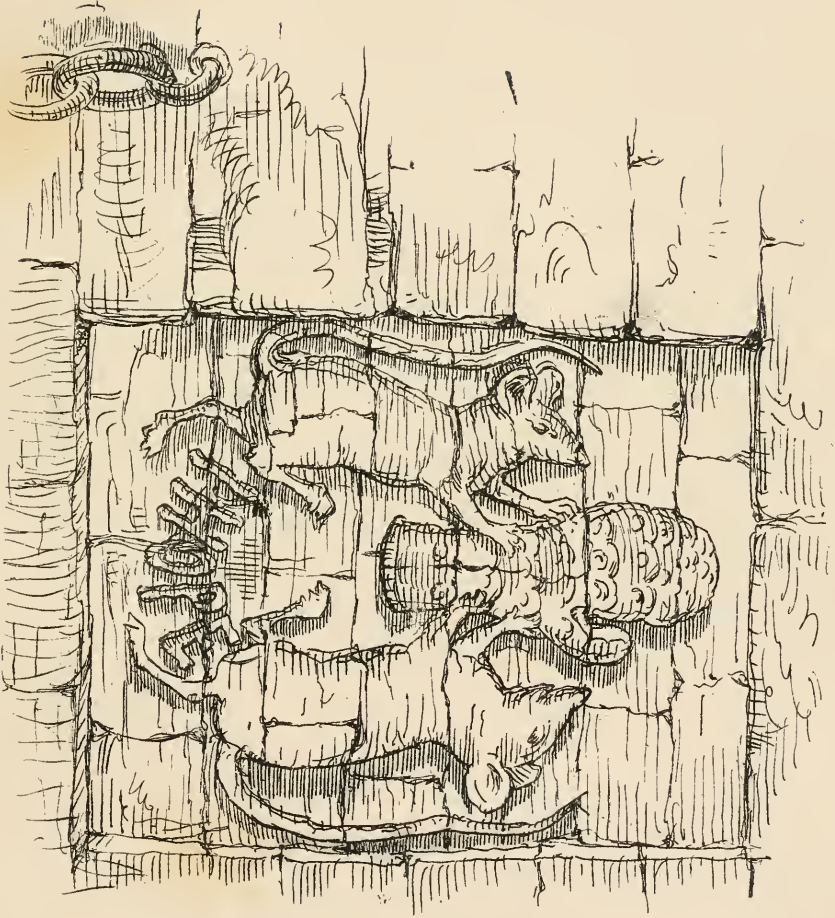
Of furniture there was none, not even a pallet of straw, and the knight had been cast by his captors prostrate upon the bare, cold floor. He tried to rise; but his strength failed and he fell back on the pavement nearly swooning. And then the events so recently enacted rushed back upon his mind: his meeting with the highland huntsman upon

the mountains, his journey with him to the castle, and the subsequent affray in the court. From that point all was a blank; yet Whitegauntlet could not but guess he had been placed in this cell by the order of that same traitorous nut.

But for what reason? He gazed about him as if the impenetrable stone walls would afford a clear solution of this deep mystery. This they could not do; but they did reveal something which caused our knight to utter a loud exclamation, and, in spite of his bruised and stiffened limbs, to spring suddenly to his feet.

The morning sun stealing in the narrow window threw a belt of light across a single panel of the wall, where the almond beheld, boldly carved in relief, the figures of two mice rampant, supporting between their outstretched claws a gauntlet of a pure white color. Beneath them appeared the motto "I Hope."

The eyes of the knight remained riveted upon these as if held there by some magnetic influence. Involuntarily his hand sought his breast, but no shield protected it now. His armor had been removed, and a robe of coarse brown cloth substituted for it. The knight, as this bitter truth dawned upon his still bewildered mind, uttered an exclamation of anger and grief, and sprang forward as if to examine the wondrous carving more closely. But he paused instantly, for as if by magic the whole suddenly disappeared, and in its place he beheld a narrow opening, back of which appeared a yawning gulf of darkness. From out this gloom stepped into the chamber the figure of a woman.



Arms sculptured on the dungeon wall.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

v

Flinging aside a heavy cloak of black velvet, she approached with rapid step the almond, who, perfectly silent, stood regarding her with a look of such intense admiration that she paused abruptly in her course and cast her eyes to the ground. A beauteous picture she formed standing thus!

That she was young was evident, yet she possessed a certain dignity not often found in maidens of her age. Her dress, of rich brown velvet, fell from her tall, slender figure in heavy folds, and seemed in its elegant simplicity well suited to the majestic grace of its wearer. Her abundant hair hung in long plaits below her waist, and was braided with strings of pearls and rubies, and crowned by a jewelled head-dress, to which was attached a veil, so thin, however, as to render her lovely face distinctly visible. In one hand she bore a tray, heaped with delicate viands.

Recovering himself somewhat, and perceiving her embarrassment, the knight threw himself on one knee, and raising the hem of her garment pressed a respectful kiss upon it. The maiden, blushing more deeply, returned the salutation by a graceful courtesy.

"Rise, fair knight," said she, in a sweet, clear voice, that thrilled through and through the almond's heart. "Time hasteneth, and I may stay here but a moment."

"Alas, lady!" replied the knight; "would you so soon deprive me of the brightest sunlight that ever entered this dreary abode?"

"Nay; but I come to lead you to that," she answered, gently. "Are you wounded, fair sir?"

"I am but scratched," he replied, smiling. "I am more faint than hurt."

"I thought as much!" she exclaimed; and, taking a tiny crystal cup from the tray, she poured into it a few red drops from a small vial, and presented it to the almond, saying, "I have some knowledge of medicine, Sir Knight."

Its effect on Whitegauntlet was almost electrical, and he sprang to his feet with arm and heart of renewed strength. The lady smiled approvingly, and blushed again as he seized her hand, and, covering it with kisses, breathed out his thanks.

"Listen!" said she at length, gently withdrawing it from his clasp. "You would escape, would you not, from this prison?"

"Yes, verily," replied the almond. "Why am I confined here at all?"

"That I know not," said the lady; "nor should I have heard aught regarding you had not a knave of the castle gossiped about you with my tirewoman."

"And what is the name of that traitor huntsman who imprisons me without just cause or reason?" cried Whitegauntlet.

"Huntsman!" repeated the lady, wonderingly; "I know nothing of any such. You are held in bondage at Almondia Castle by the order of its lord, Earl Percival. Alas that his noble name should be sullied by such evil deeds!"

"And you!" gasped the almond; "what are you to him?"

The maiden colored deeply.



Elaine appearing to Sir Aylmer Almonde.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

A. S. R. LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

6

"His cousin," she answered, after a pause. Then, quickly turning the current of conversation, she added, "The way by which I entered this chamber is known to no one but myself. I accidentally discovered it one day while roaming through the castle. Earl Percival's plan regarding you is to leave you here until starvation snaps asunder the cord that binds you to life. But this shall not be! Three evenings hence the earl, with all his retinue, attends a grand feast which the king gives at Nuttemberg, and then you may make your escape. The passage from this cell leads to a cave in the mountain-side just beyond the castle wall. There I will cause a mouse and armor to be placed, and will myself guide you to them."

"Alas!" replied the almond, "do you run no risk in thus setting at liberty a knight, who, though guilty of naught against Lord Percival, is thus imprisoned by him?"

"Fear not for me," answered the lady, "but do as I bid, and all will be well."

"Now, by mine honor as a knight of the good King Hudibert, of Vegetableria," cried Whitegauntlet, "I will not move a foot over yonder threshold, unless thou dost assure me most solemnly, that Earl Percival will not wreak deep revenge for this on thy fair young head."

The lady drew herself up haughtily.

"The Princesses of Papershell-Almonde," she replied, coldly, but with a dark fire flashing in her eye, "do not ask even the Earl Almondia's permission for what they do."

"Yet" said Whitegauntlet, "it were right unknighly in me to bring sorrow on a lady's head."

The fair almond's face relaxed.

"Assuredly, Sir Knight," she said, gravely, "if I have no fear for myself, it were ill-timed in you to feel it for me. And now, farewell! I dare stay no longer."

"Yet one question more," cried the knight, as she turned to go. "What signifies the emblem on yonder sliding panel?"

"'Tis the ancient arms of the Almonde family," replied the lady. "Centuries ago, Oscar, one of the Almondian earls, loved a beautiful maiden, and sought to woo her; but her parents desired her to wed another lover, a fierce acorn, and, in order to compel her to do this, confined her in a lonely tower in the midst of a dark forest. Beneath her window the lord of Almondia would ride every day, and at last, one morn as he passed by sighing, she managed to toss him, unseen, her white glove, with the word "I Hope" written on it; and he, adopting it for his shield, with renewed vigor defied the acorn to single combat, and slew him with one thrust of his lance. In time the maiden's parents yielded to his suit, and he ever bore the white gauntlet for his emblem."

"Strange!" murmured the almond.

"And now," said the lady, "once more, farewell," and again she turned to go; but the knight sprang forward, exclaiming: "Lady! sweet lady! if indeed fate decrees that I must so soon be left in solitude, at least tell me the name of her who has for one moment brightened this abode of gloom and sorrow."

The maiden seemed to hesitate.

"Tell me her name," pleaded the knight, "that during

my lonely sojourn here I may have a talisman to ward off despair."

The maiden seemed touched by this appeal. "It is Elaine," she murmured; and then she glided quickly through the narrow door-way, and the panel swung slowly and noiselessly into place.

It seemed to Whitegauntlet as if the sunlight had suddenly vanished from the room. He sat down on the stone bench, and tried to still the wild beating of his heart; but in vain. If there is such a sentiment as love at first sight, it was certainly this with which the beauteous lady had inspired our hero; nor was it less sincere because so sudden. Over and over again, during the long hours of that day, he recalled her every look and gesture, and the love cherished in such solitude grew deeper and deeper with every moment. When at evening he sank into a fitful slumber, it was only to dream of the sweet, the good, the beauteous Elaine.

III.

On the broad tiled hearth of the great dining-hall at Chestnutte Burr a cheerful fire of logs was burning, its ruddy blaze darting far out into the room, and vying in brightness with the morning sunlight that lay like a ribbon of red gold athwart the highly polished floor. In and out it danced between the cups and flagons on the long board which occupied the centre of the apartment,

and then, with a sudden bound, it sprang high up on the wall, and began a lively game of hide-and-seek among the quaintly carved figures of the wainscoting. But chiefly it loved to linger about the high brass fender. There it was reflected in a thousand brilliant tints, and there it found infinite amusement frolicking merrily around the seven pairs of high-heeled, silver-buckled slippers, which rested in an even line upon its polished top.

The seven pairs of slippers aforesaid were respectively the property of the Baron Launcelot Chestnutte and six of his dearest friends, who, according to the inviolable rules of the Burr, had assembled at ten o'clock, and now sat toasting their feet preparatory to an attack on the morning meal.

"Launcelot," said one of them, a tall, dignified-looking peanut, whose long, beaked nose was brought into still higher relief by a background of dark-green spectacles, "I do not like to see you grieve so deeply. It fairly takes away my appetite for breakfast."

"Indeed, I am sorry for that, Sir Marcus," replied Sir Launcelot, a fat, comfortable-looking nut, with a short queue tied neatly up in a caterpillar's skin; "but really I cannot help it. I am remarkably astonished that Aymer is not among us, as he promised. Seeds! if anything should have happened to him I would not know what to do."

"It is a pity Lord Arthur has not the date of his birth," said the peanut. "He could so easily, if he possessed it, cast his horoscope, and discover if he is threatened with any dire calamity in his twenty-sixth year. Don't you regret you have not the date of his birth, Lord Arthur?"



*The Baron Launcelot Chestnut and
his six friends.*

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ALEX. LEONARD AND
THE NEW FOUNDATIONS
R

The person addressed, a tall and rather angular cream nut, raised a pair of very dreamy eyes from contemplating the shining black buckles at his knee, and replied:—

“I most certainly do. Sir Aymer Almonde has always interested me. The son of a Nuttish exile, yet by his valor in battle risen to the rank of knighthood in Vegetabilia, his life would form an interesting study to any one. Who knows what he may yet accomplish?”

“He may be dead!”

The speaker was David Wallenutt, Count of Shaggarbarque, a short, fat individual, who had lost one leg in battle, and who generally emphasized his words by stamping its wooden substitute on the floor. On this occasion he brought it down with a vigorous thump.

“I hope it’s not quite as bad as that,” said Sir Launcelot. “I do wish Lord Arthur could cast his horoscope, for he’s a remarkable young Nut.”

“Or even,” chimed in a pecannut, who sat next to Sir Marcus, “if I had ever made a phrenological examination of his head it would be something. I could tell whether he is long-lived.”

“Great Branches and Little Twigs!” cried Count David Wallenutt, with a thud of his wooden limb which made the glasses on the table ring, and ring again; “what a life this poor knight will live if ever he does come among us! With Arthur Kremeknut casting his heroscope, and trying to pry into the secrets of his future; with Tristram Pekannutte growling because he hasn’t got the bumps that he ought to have; and, lastly, with Ludovico

Buttyrnuttt everlastingly commenting about things which do *not* concern him,—by the hind legs of a cricket,—I for one do pity him!”

This outburst was more than shells — hard though they are — could stand. Lord Ludovico Buttyrnuttt, an elderly gentleman, in an immense bag-wig, rose slowly to his feet, and, smoothing down the green muslin ruffles that fell over his wrists, said solemnly:—

“Be careful that you don’t make comments yourself, David!”

The count gave an impatient sniff.

“Ludovico,” said he, “don’t try to be martyred!”

“I am not trying to be martyred,” replied Lord Ludovico.

“Then be still,” said the count.

“Be still yourself, David!” retorted Lord Ludovico, majestically sinking back into his chair, and looking around on the assembled company with an air of triumph.

The count took a pinch of snuff. Perhaps he would have answered the butternut, had not Sir Peter Philberte, an inoffensive-looking little Nut, electrified the whole party by saying in a low tone:—

“I think Sir Aymer has been taken prisoner by bandits!”

“Why do you think so?” exclaimed all the Nuts in chorus.

“I will tell you,” replied Sir Peter. “We received a message from the inn at Hazelton saying Aymer would be with us on Monday. To-day is Thursday, and he does not

appear. Ten to one he tried the short cut across the mountains, and is held in captivity by bandits, who hope to obtain a ransom. You know that recently several travellers have been attacked by them."

"I half believe you are right!" cried Sir Tristram.

"If that is the case we must start immediately and rescue him," added Sir Launcelot.

"That's a silly idea!" put in Count David. "What could we seven do against a band of mountain thieves? They would seize the whole of us, and keep us also for a ransom. Much good we would be to Sir Aymer!"

This speech seemed, for an instant, to dash cold water on the hopes of the Nuts, when Lord Ludovico suddenly exclaimed:—

"I have an idea! Let us visit our neighbor, Lord Percival Almonde, and beseech him to help us. He has, you know, a large number of vassals, and with their help we can hunt down these bandits and rescue their prisoner."

This plan met with approbation from the Nuts, even Count David condescending to say:—

"It's the best thing you ever said in your life, Ludovico!"

To which the earl responded:—

"You are not the *only* smart person in the world, David!"

It was decided to start for Almondia Castle that day, and, accordingly, after a hasty breakfast, the Nuts commenced preparations for their exodus. But it takes time even for impatient Nuts to make ready for a journey, and

the afternoon was well spent ere all their arrangements were completed. At five o'clock they assembled in the dining-hall, where was spread the solemn banquet, of which it was the custom of these knights to partake, ere they began any undertaking of importance.

History has preserved for us the names of some of the rare dishes that graced the board on this occasion. The centre of the table was occupied by an immense golden platter, on which reposed a humming-bird, roasted, with feathers unplucked, and stuffed with honey and bitter herbs commingled; and this was flanked on either side by locusts' legs boiled with a sauce of lady-birds. Then followed snails stewed with the wings of a tree-cricket, and served with a pickle of butterflies' antennæ, and salted mouse tongues, flanked by some delicious fricasseed tadpoles. There were also some very fine capricorn beetles on the half shell, and the whole was crowned by a pie of katydids.

Having done justice to this elegant repast, and pledged themselves to the cause of Sir Aymer in a cup of rare wine, the seven knights sallied forth, and mounted the trusty steeds drawn up in a line before the door of the Burr. Sir Launcelot and Sir Peter rode side by side. They were clad in suits of splendid armor, and were mounted on richly caparisoned white mice. Then followed Count David Wallenutt, who, completely taken aback by the sudden genius of Lord Ludovico, rode along by the side of Lord Arthur Kremeknut, and never turned his head to address Lord Ludovico, whose mouse was just behind his own. The count's shield was something to be wondered at. It

was all a glitter of gold, and bore on it a representation of a salvage or wild nut, prostrated by a blow from a gigantic beetle, who stands above him, holding at arms' length the dagger of mercy. Below this dreadful picture was inscribed, "I am the Beetle!"

Lord Arthur's shield was less pretentious, and had no device save a single silver star, indicative of his favorite science, Astrology.

Sir Marcus Peenutte was mounted on a gallant steed, gayly trapped with blue and gold, and his armor matched his rodent's harness. His shield displayed a mouse couchant on a field of azure, with the motto, "I crouch but to spring."

But, with all this splendor, he did not begin with Lord Ludovico Buttyrnut. Lord Ludovico was as brilliant as the brightest shades of scarlet and yellow could make him, and sat his prancing mouse like an old campaigner. His coat-of-arms, a crimson sword, was displayed on all parts of his harness where it conveniently could be, and the hilt of his poniard was gilded and encrusted with jewels.

Last of all was Sir Tristram Pekannutte. In his younger days, Sir Tristram had wooed a lady who was particularly distinguished for her bright blue eyes. She died young, but Sir Tristram never forgot her, and in her memory had caused to be painted on his shield a pair of remarkably brilliant azure orbs.

At the head of the whole procession were some nutmegs, bearing litters which Sir Launcelot thought might be needed, should any unforeseen accident happen during the journey.

The road leading from Chestnutte Burr Barony to Almondia Castle, was of an irregular nature, and somewhat difficult to travel. It led over a high hill, then down into a bleak moor, and over a stretch of bog; it was then necessary to cross a river, which, having no bridge, had to be forded by the animals. Consequently it was late in the evening ere the knights drew in sight of Almondia Castle. As they caught the first glimpse of its watch-tower through the trees, the great bell tolled out the hour of eleven. They were now at the rear of the edifice, and their path wound upwards and around the base of the mountain on which it stood, and through a little grove of underbrush. Just as they were about to enter this thicket, Sir Tristram, who rode at some distance behind the others, called out to know if they had not heard a cry of distress.

"No," replied Sir Launcelot; "I hear no sound save the wind sighing among the trees."

"'Tis the clatter of your mouse's feet," added the Count of Shaggbarque, laughing.

"Cry or no cry," said Lord Arthur, peering out from between the bars of his vizor, "I see some person coming towards us."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Count David. "You've looked so long at the stars, Arthur, that you can't tell a tree from a knight in armor." But scarcely had the count uttered these words, ere a tall Brazil-nut, clad in full highland costume, his tartan fluttering in the wind, dashed by them on a superb mouse, discharging, as he passed, an arrow right in their midst. Fortunately, it hit no one; but it served to anger Count David beyond measure.

*Brazil-nut discharging an arrow in the
midst of the Knights in the thicket.*



THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

v

"Follow the Knight of the triumphant Beetle!" he shouted, all his warrior's spirit aroused, and on he dashed like a whirlwind, followed closely by the other Nuts.

Boldly rode Lord Ludovico that night, and great renown he won—but we anticipate. Rushing through the copse at lightning pace, the friends soon cleared it and rode out into an open space, where a fearful spectacle greeted their eyes. Right before them was a knight, armed and mounted on a powerful-looking gray mouse. Full gallantly he sat his steed, and right fiercely fought; and, indeed, good cause had he so to do, for he was defending himself as best he might, against a dozen or so huge Highlanders, who, with arrows and daggers, besieged him on every side.

At the first glimpse of him Sir Launcelot sprang erect in his saddle, and, with a loud cry, seized his lance and rushed headlong into the thickest of the fight. Oh, well was it for poor Whitegauntlet—for it was indeed he—that this timely succor came as it did, for certainly but for it he would have been slain! And here I must digress a little, in order to explain how he came to be in such a dreadful predicament.

True to her promise the lovely Elaine had each day brought him food and wine, and with every visit his admiration for her grew more intense. In ancient times, lovers did not hesitate about declaring their feelings as they do nowadays, and it was not long ere Aymer of Almonde laid his heart at the feet of his beautiful enchantress.

She burst into a passion of tears.

"But you don't know my history," she said, weeping.

"My father dying when I was very young, left me to the guardianship of my uncle, Lord Athelstan Almonde. He also died, and the care of me then devolved on his son, Earl Percival, who placed me in the charge of a distant relative, Lady Alicia Almonde, with whom I remained until my eighteenth year. Then Earl Percival came to visit me. Alas! I date all my sorrow from that day. He told me I was his betrothed, — pledged to him by my father. This I did not believe, nor do I now. I did not love him, and I told him so; but he would listen to nothing I said, and brought both Lady Alicia and myself to this castle, where he endeavors by every means to win my love; for, indeed, I believe he truly esteems me."

"But," cried Whitegauntlet, "would he forgive you the crime of releasing a prisoner of his?"

"No," answered Elaine; "but for that I care not. Death even, is preferable to a marriage with the Earl Percival!"

"Elaine! Elaine!" exclaimed Whitegauntlet, now more than ever enamored by her noble conduct, "why will you not accept my love and fly with me?"

Ah! the pleadings of love have an eloquence all their own. Elaine, leaning her head on the shoulder of the young almond, consented to his prayer, and pledged to him her eternal fidelity.

The hour fixed for the lovers to make their escape arrived. Elaine had seen the earl and his vassals depart for Nuttemberg, and, stealing down to Whitegauntlet's cell, she led him up, through a secret passage, to a cave on the mountain side. There she had ordered her own page



Elaine and White Gauntlet.

NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R

to have in readiness a mouse and armor; but the coward knave, suspecting he knew not what, and, fearful he might in some way lose his life, betrayed her to Earl Percival.

The earl listened to his story with a deep frown, and bade him place the mouse and armor as Elaine desired. Then, ostensibly departing for Nuttemberg, he, with a portion of his followers, concealed himself near the mouth of the cave, to await the development of Elaine's project. That it had any relation to his prisoner he had no suspicion; consequently he was struck nearly dumb with amazement, when, having clad himself in the suit of mail and mounted his mouse, Whitegauntlet appeared. A moment, however, sufficed for Percival to recover himself, and he sprang at the almond with the ferocity of a wild animal. Then it was that the chestnut and his friends came to the rescue; and we must now return to them.

The two most powerful warriors among the Highlanders were Earl Percival, and a villanous-looking chincapin, who, although but a dwarf, seemed to possess almost superhuman strength. He was engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with Sir Tristram Pekannutte, and had nearly gotten the better of him, when Lord Arthur Kremeknut rushed to his friend's rescue, and bore the chincapin to the ground.

"Ha, villain!" cried he, standing above the prostrate Nut with uplifted dagger, "you must die; but ere I pierce your shelly breast, I pray you tell me the date of your birth; for such a fighter as you I never met before, and I would cast your horoscope, and see what the planets say of your villanous career."

"Slay him not! Slay him not!" exclaimed Sir Tristram, vehemently. "Unlace his helm; I would examine the outline of his skull."

"Oh, spare me! spare me!" groaned the chincapin.

"What, villain!" yelled Lord Arthur, angrily, planting one foot on the dwarf's breast,— "you ask for life from the friends of Sir Aymer Almonde?"

"O, good Knight of the Silver Star," replied the chincapin, "only preserve me, and I will tell you that which never told I to Nut before."

"Of whom or what?" demanded Sir Tristram.

"Of Aymer of Almonde," answered the chincapin.

"Thou liest!" cried Sir Tristram, and dealt the dwarf such a blow with his sword as silenced his speech instantly.

"Now, by my knightly honor," exclaimed Lord Arthur, "thou hast done a right foolish thing. Mayhap he could have told us somewhat of Sir Aymer."

Sir Tristram hung his head, looking somewhat abashed.

"Well, he is dead now," added Lord Arthur; "but I warrant me had Count David seen you stop his mouth thus, he would have chastised you well with his mace."

Meanwhile Lord Ludovico carried all before him. Three powerful Highlanders had he felled to the earth,—to the intense amazement of Count David, who managed through all the fight to keep his eye on the butternut,—and now with his long bag-wig flying from beneath his helmet, he rushed on Earl Percival, and with one thrust of his lance unmounted him and brought him to the earth. The Earl of Almondia never rose again, for so true was the weapon's

course, that it laid his shell open lengthwise from end to end.

It was easy work, after the death of their leader, to subdue the other Nuts, for several of them were badly wounded, and the rest, panic-stricken, surrendered. In the midst of all, the chincapin, who in fact had only swooned, recovered his senses, and, rising, was about to crawl away when he was promptly knocked down by Sir Marcus Peenutte, who collared him, and, throwing him across his mouse's back, bound him securely to the animal.

And what of Elaine? When the Highlanders attacked him, Whitegauntlet had thrust her back into the cave, and here he found her, pale but quite serene, for Elaine's character was one of those which grief only serves to strengthen. At sight of her lover, however, quite unharmed by Earl Percival or his followers, her calmness vanished, and with a faint cry she flung herself into his arms, sobbing aloud for very joy; and all who witnessed that sad, sweet meeting were melted to tears.

"It's enough to make an embalmed rabbit weep!" said Count David.

"Ah, it reminds me so of my lost Imogene!" replied Sir Tristram, with a tender glance at the blue orbs on his shield.

Sir Launcelot, with the assistance of Sir Peter, was busily engaged in securing the riderless mice, who were galloping wildly about the plain. It was not deemed advisable to remain near Almondia Castle, lest the main body of Earl Percival's retinue, who, one of the Highlanders

explained, had been sent on to Nuttemberg, might wonder at their lord's absence and return to seek him. So, carefully binding their prisoners, and placing the wounded in one litter, and the body of the earl in the other, the victorious knights began their journey back to Chestnutte Burr.

Elaine rode beside Whitegauntlet, on Earl Percival's snow-white mouse. She had recovered her calmness, and managed the spirited rodent with such skill, as to win great praise from Count David, who, in fact, had taken a great fancy to her. The sun was well up in the heavens when they reached the Barony, and they rode into the court singing their war-song, composed for them by Sir Peter Philberte, who was something of a poet. The chorus rang out joyfully on the air:—

“ Honor is glorious !
Sing the victorious
Seven Knights of Nuttanny.”

As soon as he had disencumbered himself of his armor, Sir Launcelot sent a message to the king at Nuttemberg, acquainting him with the whole story of Whitegauntlet's capture and release. Instantly His Majesty despatched a troop of picked acorns, whom he placed at Sir Launcelot's disposal.

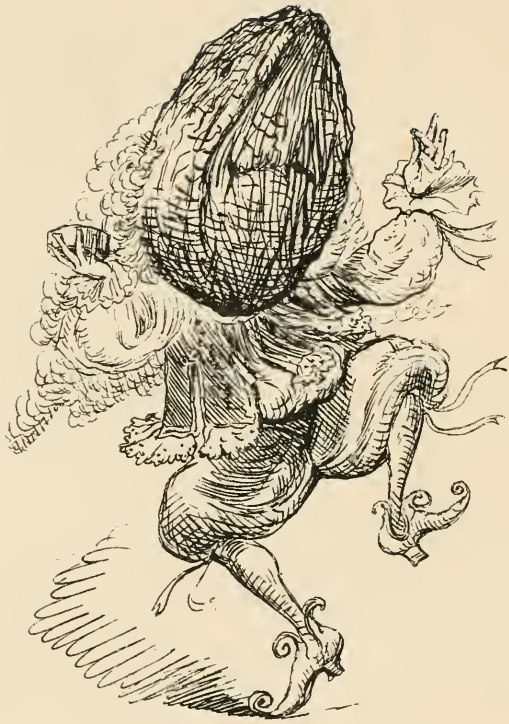
Castle Almondia was visited, and there was found Lady Alicia Almonde, quite distracted by the sudden disappearance of both Elaine and Percival. She heard the news of the earl's death with sorrow; but her grief was somewhat assuaged on learning of his conduct towards Whitegauntlet.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

U



Lord Ludovico Butternutte capering about.

Sir Launcelot courteously invited her to the Burr, and she journeyed there under the protection of Lord Ludovico Buttyrnut, whom she declared to Elaine was the most fascinating gentleman she had ever met.

Sir Launcelot caused Earl Percival's body to be embalmed, and three days later he was quietly interred in the mausoleum at Almondia.

IV.

A week glided quickly by. Wrapped in his dream of love, and seizing every moment to be with Elaine, Whitegauntlet had taken little heed of the movements of his seven friends, though, had he done so, he must have noticed that some important matter was weighing on their minds. It was, therefore, with considerable surprise, that he one day found himself summoned to Sir Launcelot's library, on an affair of great moment.

Following the attendant who brought the message, he was ushered into a lofty apartment, where sat the baron and his six boon-companions. They all shook hands with him cordially, Lord Ludovico actually so far forgetting his dignity, as to cut three capers across the room as he placed a chair for him, to the intense delight of Count David, who stamped his wooden leg vigorously on the floor in token of approval. As for Sir Launcelot he looked as he said he felt, "remarkably jubilant." He held the

almond's hand tightly in his own, while Sir Marcus Peenutte, after carefully wiping his spectacles and setting his bob wig, drew forth from the depths of a green silk bag, which was attached to his side, a roll of closely written parchment, sealed and tied with red tape.

"Ahem!" said Sir Marcus, breaking the seals and slowly unrolling the manuscript; "I have here, Sir Aymer, a document which I have great pleasure in informing you is founded on the rough statement, or confession, of that mighty rascal, Joseph Chinkapyn, sometimes yclept Bloody Joe Chinkapyn."

"Why don't you explain yourself clearly, Marcus?" exclaimed Lord Ludovico, "and tell Sir Aymer that Bloody Joe is one of the captured vassals of Earl Percival Almonde?"

"Why, that is just what I was about to do when you interrupted me," replied Sir Marcus, mildly.

"If you'll keep still, Ludovico, Marcus will be clear enough," said Count David.

"And I will now proceed," added Sir Marcus, "to read the aforesaid document aloud."

With another preliminary "Ahem!" and setting his glasses more securely on his nose, he began:—

"About thirty years ago, the head of the house of Almonde was a noble Nut, Rudolph by name. He married a beautiful lady, to whom he was tenderly attached; but she died young, and all his affections centred on his only child, a boy, then about three years of age. Rudolph was, however, naturally of a melancholy disposition —"

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

B

U



*Sir Marcus Peanutte reading
the document.*

"That is true! I remember him well!" put in Lord Ludovico.

"And fearing," went on Sir Marcus, "that his gloominess might cloud the life of his son, he invited his younger brother, Athelstan, to take up his abode at Castle Almondia. Athelstan was also a widower, with one child, Percival, and it was the object of the earl to have the boy as a playmate for his own little one. Well, Athelstan came; but, in spite of his cheerful society, the castle was overclouded with gloom, for Lord Rudolph grieved for his wife, nor could anything dispel his sorrow. At length he sickened and died, leaving his child in his brother's care. Now Athelstan was of quite a different nature from Lord Rudolph —"

"Indeed he was!" exclaimed Lord Ludovico.

"Ludovico," said Count Dávid, "Marcus will never finish his story if you keep interrupting him."

"He was gay and careless," continued Sir Marcus; but Lord Ludovico chimed in:—

"Careless! Yes, he was, and impertinent too! I well remember, at a banquet he gave, he became angry with Launcelot, and pulled the caterpillar's skin completely off his queue. But they had it out with rapiers, and Launcelot gave him a pretty severe slash."

"Silence!" cried Sir Marcus. "He was gay and careless, and he at once commenced a life of pleasure at the castle. He gathered together a host of his friends, Nuts, Fruits, and Vegetables, for he found his companions anywhere, and such a hunting of locusts, and racing and chasing, began as had not been seen at the castle since it was built. Athelstan fed

and clothed all his followers, of whom I need scarcely say there was a numerous train, and before long his wealth, beside a large portion of his ward's patrimony, was squandered. Athelstan was in despair! Something must be done to refill his empty purse. His friends suggested a method, and he, in pursuance of their advice, began a marauding career among the mountains —

"Those that you passed over, Sir Aymer," put in Lord Ludovico.

"Ludovico," said Count David, reproachfully, "I should not think you would keep interrupting Marcus in this impolite manner."

"And by robbing chance travellers," read on Sir Marcus, "soon became as wealthy as before. But, as every one knows, one evil deed leads to another, and, before long, not content with the riches he had amassed, Athelstan began to covet the title of Lord of Almondia. Now, this properly belonged to his nephew; but, alas! he was but a child, incapable of defending his own rights. Athelstan took counsel with his friends, and a plan was agreed upon by which to become rid of the young heir. They summoned a tomato, one of the fiercest and most desperate of the band, and bade him take the unfortunate child into the mountains, and there dispose of him as he thought best —"

"Of course you understand that they wished the tomato to take his life," said Lord Ludovico.

"Ludovico! Ludovico! will you be quiet?" cried the Count of Shaggbarque.

"You are not *very* still yourself, David!" retorted the earl, with dignity.

"But," went on Sir Marcus, "there sometimes dwells, even within the breast of a mountain bandit, a heart capable of tender sensations. The tomato pitied the unfortunate child, and, instead of killing him, as, doubtless, Athelstan intended he should, he fled with him on rabbit-back to Vegetableria, where he reared the boy in strict seclusion."

Whitegauntlet started and passed his hand rapidly over his brow, but remained silent as the peanut continued:—

"Athelstan, finding that the tomato did not return to the castle, sent out in search of him; but no trace of him could be found. So he despatched spies to all parts of the country; but nothing could be heard of the runaway, and at last he gave up all hopes of ever seeing him again. Proclaiming that his nephew had died of a fever, he took possession of the castle as Earl of Almondia; but from that time to the day of his death he never enjoyed a moment of comfort, for he was in constant fear lest his nephew was alive, and would one day return to claim his rights. When he died, some five years ago, he was succeeded by his son, Percival, who, by far, more subtle than his father, immediately proceeded to ingratiate himself in the good opinion of all who knew him. He pretended to be greatly horrified at his father's evil deeds, and, while secretly in league with the mountain robbers, was ostensibly seeking to exterminate them; and so well did he play his part that no one suspected his real sentiments. Believing, like Athelstan, that the rightful heir was still alive, he used every

means to discover him, and at length succeeded in doing so, not by any of his own agents, but, accidentally, through one who would sooner have taken his own life than have injured the unfortunate almond."

Here Sir Marcus paused, and Sir Launcelot began to cough and fidget about in his chair, while Count David stamped his leg, and Sir Peter and Sir Tristram exchanged significant glances. Sir Marcus continued:—

"Our beloved friend, the Baron Launcelot Chestnutte, visited Vegetableria, and, while there, became acquainted with a young knight, in whom he at once grew deeply interested. This knight claimed to be the son of a Nuttish exile, who, dying, had left him in charge of a tomato, by whom he had been carefully reared. His fearlessness and love of adventure, when quite young, attracted the attention of Kukumber, Marquis of Vine, who took him into his service as esquire; and so brave and talented was he that he soon became worthy of knighthood. Once dubbed, he soon became known as the 'Peerless Knight of Vegetableria!' No adventure so perilous but he would undertake it; no just cause but he would venture life and limb in its behalf.

"Well, as I have said, Sir Launcelot was charmed with this noble young Nut, and begged him to visit Nuttanny, his native land. This he promised to do, and Sir Launcelot, shortly after, returned home. One day, while talking with Earl Percival Almonde, Sir Launcelot mentioned the noble knight, and told his history. It was enough. Emissaries were instantly despatched to Vegetableria, the old tomato was

hunted down, and a full confession regarding his adopted son was wrung from him — ”

“The papers proving that the knight is indeed the lost heir of Almondia, are in the second drawer of Earl Percival’s cabinet, at the castle!” broke in Lord Ludovico, no longer able to restrain his excitement; but Sir Marcus read on calmly:—

“From the shock of his interview with Earl Percival’s agents, the poor old tomato never recovered. A month after it occurred he was dead.”

Whitegauntlet bowed his head, visibly affected, as Sir Marcus continued:—

“The next thing then to be done, was to invent some way by which the new-found heir could be placed in Earl Percival’s power. After watching him a year, it was discovered that he intended to fulfil his promise to Sir Launcelot, and visit his native land. How he was followed and taken captive on the mountains is too well known to Sir Aymer Almonde, who has doubtless guessed, long ago, that he, himself, is the lost heir of Almondia!”

Sir Marcus folded up the paper and carefully replaced it in the green bag. Whitegauntlet still remained silent, with his face buried in his hands. The Nuts deeply sympathized with his feelings, but refrained from intruding on his thoughts. After a few moments he rose, and, grasping Sir Launcelot’s hand, pressed it warmly within his own, gazing on the other Nuts with looks more eloquent than words.

Lord Ludovico took a pinch of snuff.

“What I look at,” said he, “is the singularity of

Launcelot's being the means of getting Sir Aymer into Lord Percival's hands, and then of getting him out of them."

"You're a sensible Nut, I must say!" exclaimed Count David. "It was you, yourself, who first proposed visiting Earl Percival, and were thus the rescuer of Aymer!" and he brought his leg down on the floor with a terrific bang.

"So I was!" said Lord Ludovico, utterly taken aback.

"One question I must ask," said Sir Launcelot. "How came you, Aymer, by the arms of Almondia? You did not have them when I was in Vegetableria."

"No," replied Sir Aymer. "I was at Vine with the Marquis when, one morning, news of my foster-father's illness came. I immediately started to visit him, but arrived at his bedside only to find him dying. Almost at the instant I appeared, he drew from his finger a ring and placed it in my hand. It was of curious workmanship, and had the Whitegauntlet, with the motto, 'I hope,' carved upon its face.

"'Take it for your arms,' said my father, 'for by right it is the emblem of the —' but ere he could finish the sentence he fell back lifeless. I did as he bade me, and have since been known as the 'Knight of the Whitegauntlet.'"

"It's a remarkable case," said Sir Launcelot; "but even though it is I do not feel justified in detaining you longer to discuss it. There is your cousin Elaine, doubtless wondering why you are so long absent from her; so haste away, and make her acquainted with your wondrous story."

"He's a fine fellow!" said Sir Tristram, as the door closed after Whitegauntlet.

"And a good soldier too," added Sir Peter.

"The little Elaine is a lovely creature," observed Sir Marcus.

"So is the Lady Alicia!" chimed in Lord Ludovico, in a tone of firm conviction, whereat Count David pounded his wooden limb several times on the floor, and the other Nuts laughed heartily.

There is not much more to tell. It was an occasion not soon to be forgotten when Aymer of Almondia, Knight of the Whitegauntlet, was wedded to his fair young cousin, the Princess of Papershell Almonde. She received this title in right of her mother, and with it a dowry of ten million stems.

Three hundred vassals were entertained by the earl in his extensive parks, and twice as many guests in the castle. The King of Nuttany, and the queen, graced the marriage by their presence, and all the peers of the realm flocked to do honor to the new-found heir of Almondia. Prince Gustave, of Vegetableria, was also one of the guests, and Whitegauntlet's former patron, Kukumber, Marquis of Vine, who presented the bride with a casket of jewels to the value of a million seeds. But of all there assembled, none were so gay as the chestnut and his six good friends.

Lord Arthur had cast Sir Aymer's horoscope, and predicted for him a glorious and happy future. Sir Tristram had made a phrenological examination of his skull, and found him possessed of all the virtues, and none of the vices, peculiar to the Nuttish race. Sir Marcus, Sir Launce-

lot, and Sir Peter were quietly happy; but Lord Ludovico, as usual, carried off the palm.

He appeared brilliantly attired in a suit of brown satin, lined with gold-colored silk, and heavily embroidered with pearls; his ruffles were of the rarest lace, and the heels of his slippers so high as to add considerably to his stature. But the crowning glory of his toilet was a wig of luxuriant brown curls, seemingly of the glossiest hair, but which proved, upon close inspection, to be of spun glass; as fine and flexible, however, as the softest human locks.

“He capers around like a beetle on his back!” exclaimed Count David, satirically, as Lord Ludovico solicited the hand of Lady Alicia Almonde for a minuet. “Mark my word, he’ll marry that lady yet!”

And here I may as well add that the count prophesied correctly, and that three months later Aymer and Elaine led the Vegetablerian Reel at Lord Ludovico’s wedding.

In conclusion, Joseph Chinkapyn, or, as he was more often called, Bloody Joe, instead of reaping the rich reward he anticipated from Sir Aymer for his confession, was, by the king’s order, banished to the Island of Hickorie, where he soon died of disappointment and chagrin.

So falls the curtain over the friends and enemies of Whitegauntlet.

THE END.



HB
75-

PRINCIPALS MOTIVATION
PETER J. HARRIS
1977